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MORAL SERIES

BY

RODERICK MacEACHEN
Priest of Columbus Diocese

Precepts
First
Commandment

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MORAL SERIES

Vol. II

CHAPTER I

The Precept of Faith

FAITH, hope and charity are called the three Theological virtues. They are divine virtues. They come from God. We are bound by precept to practice these three holy virtues.

Faith may be viewed either as an act or a habit. It is called actual or habitual faith. Actual faith is an act of the intellect by which we accept the truth of God's teachings.

Habitual faith is a divine virtue infused in us by God. It is a supernatural habit. It leads our mind to give full assent to the truths revealed by God. Habitual faith is permanent.

Actual faith is a passing action. Habitual faith exists even in the soul of the newly baptized infant.

Faith must extend to all the truths revealed by God. It must embrace divine Revelation in its entirety. Yet, primarily, faith refers to God and His divine perfections. We must first believe in God. Then we must accept His divine teachings.

Faith rests upon the authority of God. Human knowledge rests upon human authority. Opinion rests upon personal ideas. Conviction rests upon certain human conclusions that we have formed. Hence, the motive for faith is God Himself. The assurance of faith is divine Truth. The certainty of faith is God's Own infallibility.

He who denies one article of Revelation rejects the authority of God. To believe the truths of Revelation is to profess faith in the infallible authority of God.

There are certain truths which we must know before we can have actual faith. These are called preambles of faith. Reason must accept them. Otherwise it would be impossible to elicit an act of faith.

We must know that God exists. We must know that God is Truth. We must know that God can not be deceived. We must know that God can not err. For faith rests upon the authority of God.

Reason tells us that God is Truth. He would not be God if His intellect could err. To be God He must be infinitely truthful. He must be infallible in all His judgments.

There are two truths that must be known before we can elicit an act of faith. We must know that God has revealed His truth to man. We must know that God is infallible. Yet faith does not necessarily follow the knowledge of these two truths.

There are certain facts that are called motives of credibility. Such are miracles, prophecies, the spread of the Church, the lives of the saints, the constancy of the martyrs. These are motives for believing the fact of divine Revelation.

Faith does not proceed from reason. It is merely preceded by reason. It rests upon reason as a basis. None but a rational creature can believe. Yet faith is an act of the intellect and the will. It is the will guided by God's grace that commands the intellect to accept the truth.

Reason examines the motives for believing. The evidence that reason finds tells us that God has revealed His Truth. It tells us that we can put our whole trust in God's holy word.

The revealed Truth comes to us through the Catholic Church. She is the infallible teacher of God's Truth.

Hence, by faith we believe all the teachings of the Church. This is Catholic faith. It is belief in the revealed Truth transmitted to us by the authority of the Church.

The Church has her authority from God. It is God's Own authority. God speaks to us through the Church. It is for this reason that God has endowed the Church with infallibility.

Habitual faith may be lively or dead. It is lively when it works through charity. Faith is lively in the man who strives to do the will of God. It is dead in the sinner. He has no love of God in his heart.

Actual faith may be internal or external. Internal faith is the assent of faith in the mind. External faith is this assent expressed by words, deeds or other signs.

Actual faith may be explicit or implicit. It is explicit when the be-

liever knows that this particular truth is revealed. It is implicit when the believer knows not that this particular truth has been revealed. Yet he believes another truth in which this is contained.

For instance, a man believes everything contained in the Holy Scriptures. Yet he does not know that the Scriptures teach the resurrection of the body.

Actual faith may be formal or virtual. It is formal when it means express belief in a truth because it was revealed by God. Thus a person believes in the Incarnation because God revealed it. Virtual faith follows some other act of virtue. A person kneels in prayer. His action is virtually an act of faith in God.

Faith is a great gift of God. It makes salvation possible. It is that divine virtue which makes men par-

takers in the power and knowledge of God. "And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord."[1]

[1] St. Luke i, 45.

CHAPTER II

The Necessity of Faith

ADULTS can not be saved without faith. By adults, we understand all those that have reached the use of reason. The Apostle says: "But without faith it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and is a rewarder to them that seek him."[1]

Faith is absolutely necessary for salvation. No one can be saved unless he dispose himself for salvation. Everyone must work out his own salvation. This, of course, refers to those who possess the use of reason.

Holy Writ again and again refers to the necessity of faith. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be

[1] Epistle to the Hebrews xi, 6.

saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned."[2]

Again the Gospel says: "He that doth not believe is already judged."[3]

There is a divine precept of faith. "We have confidence towards God . . . and this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ."[4] This is a grave precept. Those who keep it not will be lost. Those who disregard it are already judged.

To be saved we must have actual faith. We must believe certain fundamental truths. No one can be saved unless he believes, at least, two great truths. He must believe that there is a God. He must also believe that God is our rewarder.

No one can be saved unless he turn to God. Hence, he must know that

[2] St. Mark xvi, 16.
[3] St. John iii, 18.
[4] 1 Epistle of St. John iii, 21-23.

there is a God. No one can work out his salvation unless he recognizes God as his last end. Thus he must believe that God rewards good and punishes evil.

More is demanded of those to whom the Gospel has been preached. It is probable that these can not be saved unless they believe also in the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation. Yet a person at the point of death may be baptized though he does not know these two mysteries.

All Christians must know and believe the principal mysteries of Faith. They must also know the commandments that are to be observed by all.

Christ said to the Apostles: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned."[5]

[5] St. Mark xvi, 15, 16.

This precept of Christ is taken to embrace chiefly four things. These are the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Sacraments that may be necessary for all. Such are the Sacraments of Baptism, Penance and the Holy Eucharist.

It is not necessary that the faithful be able to recite all these truths by memory. They need not necessarily know them in the order in which they are generally taught. It suffices if they are able to answer correctly when asked about them.

A person may not be able to define the Blessed Trinity. Yet he believes in the Unity and Trinity of God. He may be asked: "Is there but one God?" He answers: "There is but one God."

There may be persons who can not say the Our Father. They may have some failing of memory. Yet they should, at least, know the substance

of this holy prayer. It expresses all that we hope from God. It contains all that we can ask of God.

Blessed are we who have the gift of Faith. Our minds are lifted up to God. We know the great mysteries of eternity. Faith has led us far beyond the narrow sphere of human reason. It has made us partakers of divine knowledge. It has made our intellect more like the intellect of God Himself.

CHAPTER III

Internal and External Faith

THE precept of faith is twofold. It is affirmative and it is negative. By the affirmative precept we are commanded to believe all that God has revealed. We must believe all that the Church teaches. The negative precept forbids all dissent and doubt in these truths.

We are not bound to keep these truths of faith always present in our mind. We elicit an act of faith at certain times. This is internal faith. Sometimes we are obliged to make such an act of faith. Again, we make an act of faith for the sake of devotion. Thus we satisfy the precept of faith.

The act of faith need not be formally expressed. It need not be expressed in

words. It may be internal and implicit. To recite the Apostles' Creed devoutly is an act of faith. To make the sign of the cross, to pray, to hear Mass, to receive the Sacraments generally implies faith.

Those who have just learned the truths of Revelation are bound to make an act of faith. Children are bound to make an act of faith as soon as they have been instructed in the truths of religion. Converts are bound to make an act of faith when they embrace the Faith.

The faithful sometimes suffer temptations against faith. They should then make an act of faith. When the temptation is strong they are bound to do so.

It is a sin to put off the profession of faith. Many are convinced that ours is the true Faith. Then they are under grave obligation to profess the Faith as soon as possible.

In some countries there are laws that forbid minors to change their religion. These laws are unjust. Pastors are bound to receive these minors when they desire to enter the Church. It matters not what difficulties may follow.

It is a holy practice often to elicit an act of faith. The true Christian gladly makes an act of faith. He includes it in his morning and evening prayers.

We are bound to profess our faith openly. This is external faith. Christ has commanded us. He says: "Everyone therefore that shall confess me before men, I will confess him before my Father who is in heaven. But he that shall deny me before men, I will deny him before my Father who is in heaven."[1]

We must profess our faith. "For," says St. Paul, "with the heart, we believe unto justice; but, with the

[1] St. Matthew x, 32, 33.

mouth, confession is made unto salvation."[2]

The precept of external faith is also both affirmative and negative. We are bound to profess our faith. We are also forbidden to deny our faith. The affirmative precept of faith is both divine and ecclesiastical.

The divine precept of professing our faith is binding in many cases. In ordinary circumstances a person may refuse to state his belief. But sometimes this refusal might be equivalent to a denial of faith. Then we must openly profess our faith. Such circumstances might easily arise in time of persecution.

A person may be asked whether he is a Catholic. He may be asked about a dogma of faith. It may be in time of persecution by civil power. It may be in times of political turmoil. The State may be opposed to the Catholic

[2] Epistle to the Romans x, 10.

Faith. The Catholic may suffer great loss by his profession. He may even suffer imprisonment or death. Yet he is ever bound to profess his faith openly.

He is bound to profess his faith even though he be questioned privately by a public official. Sometimes he is bound to profess his faith before private individuals. They may be animated with hatred toward the Faith. They may wish to make him ashamed of his religion. Then he is bound to profess it.

Silence is sometimes a denial of faith. Scoffers may mock the Faith in the presence of a Catholic. They may declare that there is no one present that would profess such a faith. Then the Catholic is bound to speak. He is bound to declare his faith openly.

An action may be a denial of faith. To sacrifice to idols was all that the

pagan persecutors demanded of the early Christians. They knew this would mean a denial of the Christian Faith. To miss Mass on Sunday might be a denial of faith. This could happen in times of bitter hostility to the Church. The enemy watches for those who go to the Catholic Church. A weak Catholic might stay away to conceal the fact that he is a Catholic. He would thus deny his faith.

It is a grave sin to deny the Faith. Denial of faith may be direct or indirect. It is a direct denial wilfully and knowingly to reject the true Faith. It is also a direct denial of the Faith to accept a false belief. To assist at false religious worship is an indirect denial of the Faith. The person may not intend to deny his faith. Yet others may look upon his action as a denial of the Faith. He may give scandal to others.

Sometimes a denial of faith may be

merely external. A person says he does not believe. In his heart he still believes. He intends to deceive those to whom he makes his denial. This is also a grave sin. It is a grievous offense against God. It is not permitted to make this external denial of faith even to save our life.

A feigned denial of faith is a lie of action. It is a grave insult to God. It is a grave scandal to others. A person who makes such a denial of faith does not indeed become a heretic. Yet he commits a grave sin against the precept of faith.

It is permitted to flee in time of persecution. Some indeed may be bound in duty to remain. Pastors and bishops should stay with their flock. There are others who would do well to remain and suffer. They might comfort and strengthen others. Then there are others who should flee for the common good. They may be

needed by the Church. Others may be weak. They should flee lest they fall away.

To endure trials and death is a great gift of God. There is no place for rashness in time of persecution. God gives the grace of fortitude to those who are forced to suffer for Him. Yet some have been rash. They rushed into danger. They trusted to their own human fortitude. But they fell away.

Sometimes an action may be a denial of faith. Under certain circumstances to eat meat on Friday might be equivalent to a denial of faith. This might happen when there is an obligation of professing the Faith openly. Thus to eat meat on Friday might show contempt for the authority of the Church. It might show approval of false belief.

At times it is permitted to use equivocal words. This supposes that

there is then no obligation of making an open profession of Faith. A person is asked about his religion. He may say: "Oh, that is not your concern. I am a Christian."

God demands courage and character in those who serve Him. The moral coward is always a poor Christian. Christ set us the example of a true Christian life. It is to be a life of trial and temptation.

The history of our holy Church is glorious in the lives of the great saints and martyrs. They were strong in faith. They were fearless before the threats and temptations of the world. They professed the Faith boldly before men. Well may we strive to imitate them. Proudly indeed do we profess the Faith for which countless multitudes of valiant martyrs laid down their lives.

It is our greatest pride and glory to profess the Faith of Christ. Gladly

do we profess our faith before the world. But we profess it modestly. We are meek in our faith. We know that it is God's greatest gift to us. Hence, we are forbearing toward those who dwell in the darkness of error. We pray that God may grant them the light of faith. Every day of our lives we thank God for having given us the true Catholic faith.

CHAPTER IV

Sins Against Faith

THERE are sins of omission against faith. To neglect to learn the truths of faith is a sin. To fail to do what Faith teaches is also a sin.

There are sins of commission against faith. To do something forbidden by faith is a sin. There is also a sin of excess against faith. To believe in superstition is a sin of excess. Then there is the sin of defect. This is the sin of unbelief. A person sins against the Faith by infidelity, heresy and apostasy.

Unbelief is the lack of faith. A non-baptized person is an unbeliever or an infidel. He has not the habit of faith. Heretics and apostates are also called unbelievers.

Unbelief may be due to the fact that the unbeliever has never heard about the Faith. It is then negative. It is not a sin. For it is not wilful.

Unbelief may be due to neglect. The unbeliever has the opportunity to learn about the Faith. Yet he neglects to do so. He feels that he should seek the Truth. He has reasonable doubts about his own religious tenets. This is a grave sin of omission.

Unbelief may be due to ill will. The unbeliever has learned the truths of faith. Yet he refuses to accept them. He rejects them. This is positive unbelief. It is a grave sin of commission. It shows contempt for God's Revelation.

There are many kinds of infidelity. Such are paganism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, deism, atheism and pantheism. Each represents a special form of error.

Entirely to fall away from the Chris-

tian faith is apostasy. A person who has been baptized and abandons the Faith is an apostate. Those who from infancy have been reared in heresy are not apostates. Only those who have once professed the Faith can become apostates or heretics.

It is not necessary to join a religious sect to be an apostate. It suffices to leave the Christian religion. Hence, rationalists, materialists and free-thinkers are apostates. This supposes that they were baptized in the Faith.

Wilful and persistent error against any article of Faith is called heresy. None other than a Christian can become a heretic. To be a heretic he must accept some false teaching.

To be a heretic a man must rebel against the authority of the Church. He must refuse to accept the truths which she teaches.

To deny one single doctrine of Faith is heresy. However, it is not

heresy to deny a Theological opinion. It is heresy to deny a truth that is clearly contained in Holy Writ. It may be a truth that the Church has never defined. Yet it is heresy to deny it.

A person may fall into error regarding a truth of faith. Yet he may intend to submit to the authority of the Church. So long as he has this intention he is not a heretic.

Heresy may be internal or external. Internal heresy exists in the mind alone. External heresy is that which is expressed by words or actions. Then, too, it may be expressed by the omission of a deed. A person may be required to retract certain writings. To omit this retraction would be external heresy.

Formal heresy and apostasy are always mortal sins. They are very grave mortal sins. They are more grave than any sins against the moral virtues.

Heresy may proceed from invincible ignorance. Then it is called material heresy. Material heresy is not a sin. It may, however, include the sin of neglect. There may be doubts in the person's mind. He should investigate the truth. To neglect to do so is a sin. This may even be a mortal sin. For the neglect is often serious.

A Catholic may have doubts about his faith. These are often mere temptations. They are not sinful. It may be a sin, however, to neglect to resist these temptations.

Doubts about the Faith may be negative. A person may debate with himself about the truth of faith. This does not make him a heretic. For he does not look upon the truth as doubtful. Yet he places himself in great danger.

Doubts about the Faith may be positive. A person looks upon the doctrines of faith as doubtful and un-

certain. He thus sins against Faith. He is a formal heretic.

We must give full assent to the doctrines of Faith. We must accept them as true. We must rest secure in the authority of God and the Church.

Heretics, infidels and Jews are permitted to attend our churches. They may be present at sermons, at devotions and at all divine services. Yet they are excluded from the reception of the Sacraments. They can not receive the sacramentals that are publicly administered in the Church. They can not receive ecclesiastical burial. They can not take an active part in any public function of religion.

The Holy Office has given forth many decisions concerning heretics and unbelievers. "It is not allowed to invite heretics into the choir during the sacred functions to sing the responses. Nor is it allowed at divine worship to give them the pax, blessed

candles, blessed palms and other things that pertain to external worship. For these things are considered the marks of the interior union and consent."[1]

Again, "heretics, schismatics and Jews, even though they be only boys and girls, are not to be admitted to sing in the choir at the sacred functions in the Catholic churches."[2]

It is not permitted to allow non-Catholics to carry candles or lights during the sacred functions.

Catholics are not permitted to take part in false worship. It is a profession of error. It is a virtual denial of faith. To sing at protestant services is to take part in false worship. To partake of their communion service is also a taking part in false worship. At least, these things always include some intention of doing so.

To take part in false worship is for-

[1] Holy Office, June 8, 1859.
[2] Holy Office, May, 1899.

bidden both by the law of the Church and by the law of nature. It is a grave sin. It is a cause of scandal to the faithful. It confirms heretics in their error. It is an approbation of false religion. It is a denial of the true religion.

It is sometimes permitted to be present in a protestant church. This always supposes a reasonable cause. It also supposes that there is no danger of scandal or perversion. It is permitted to attend the funeral of a friend or relative in a protestant church.

It is not permitted to join with the sects in public prayers. The Church sometimes proclaims public prayers. It is not allowed to invite the sects to take part in these public prayers. For their whole worship is considered heretical.

We may indeed pray privately with heretics. Yet we may not join in prayers that contain heresy. We may say the

Lord's Prayer with them. We may say any Catholic prayer with them.

Catholic parents should never allow their children to be baptized by a heretical minister. The father may be a protestant. The mother may be forced to submit. Yet she should never give her internal consent.

Catholics are never permitted to act as sponsors at a protestant baptism. Baptism, solemnly conferred by a non-Catholic clergyman, is a heretical function. To act as sponsor then would be to take part in false worship.

It is not forbidden to attend the marriage of friends in a protestant church. This is a mere material presence. There is no intention of taking part in protestant services.

It is not permitted to act as a witness at a marriage before a protestant minister. Nor is it permitted to act as bridesmaid or best man.

For this is a participation in a protestant ceremony.

Yet the minister may act as a civil officer. He may use only the form of marriage used by civil magistrates. There may be no religious ceremony connected with the marriage. Then if there are good reasons a Catholic might licitly act as a witness.

Catholics are never permitted to contract marriage before a protestant minister. The marriage would not be valid. Furthermore, the contracting parties would be excommunicated.

Catholics are not permitted to attend an unlawful marriage of Catholics.

Catholics may be obliged to be present in a protestant church because of official position. There is no intention on the part of authority to favor the sect. Nor is there any intention of showing contempt for the Catholic faith. In this case it is permitted to attend.

A secretary or attendant of an official may be obliged to be present at protestant services on certain occasions. There are special functions sometimes held in protestant churches at which soldiers attend. It may be to honor some personage. For the sake of order, sailors may be obliged to attend such services. All those are but officially present. They take no part in the services.

It is dangerous to faith to attend protestant institutions and schools. The danger from non-Catholic institutions is spiritual. The spirit of indifference reigns there. The spirit of contempt for spiritual authority is rampant. The spirit of self-complacency in matters of religion is found there.

Protestantism is an easy-going form of religion. It is negative in character. It makes few or no demands on human nature. It imposes no strict precepts

and obligations upon its followers. This is all enticing to human nature. Little by little the spirit of indifference grows upon all that come in daily contact with these principles. Those "liberal" ideas make their impress, especially upon young minds.

Both the clergy and the laity are forbidden to hold public debates on the Faith. They must have permission from ecclesiastical authority to do so. Priests may be provoked to debate on matters of religion. It is then permitted to debate before a small crowd. Yet even here good judgment should prevail. Controversy generally engenders bitterness. It seldom produces good results.

Laymen are forbidden to enter even private controversies.[3] It is easier to propound difficulties than to answer them. However, there are many learned laymen in the Faith. The

[3] C. Quicunque 2, de Haerticis in 6, V. 2.

occasion may arise when they should defend the Faith. Great good may be produced. They are then permitted to debate upon the question of religion.

Religious debates may be thrust upon men. Then the Catholic should always speak in the spirit of kindness and forbearance. Bitterness and invective are always harmful. The spirit of meekness and charity should animate those who defend our holy Faith. For they speak in the name of our meek and gentle Redeemer. They are followers of our loving Saviour.

Non-Catholic clubs and associations are dangerous to Catholic youth. They appeal to the sentimental in the young. Their good works are generally confined to so-called reforms and acts of human uplift. Such things appeal strongly to the impulsiveness of youth.

Humanitarianism is prescribed by the law of nature. It is sometimes the sole object of charity organizations.

Yet it is not always pure Christian charity. There may be little of the supernatural in it. Hence, it does not form a standard of Christian charity.

Catholics live side by side with protestants and unbelievers. They are indeed bound to keep aloof from their religious services. Yet Catholics are bound to love their separated brethren. They respect their religious convictions. They should pray for them. As a matter of principle they should consider them sincere in their belief.

Catholics indeed pity the sad plight of those who do not possess the true Faith. They pray that God may give them the true Light. They hope that these unbelievers may some day know the blessings of faith. They trust that they also may enjoy that peace which the world can not give.

Faith is indeed a gift of God. It brings the blessings of heaven to earth. It elevates man above the sordid

world about him. "Blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. For, amen, I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear and have not heard them."[4]

[4] St. Matthew xiii, 16,17.

CHAPTER V

The Precept of Hope

HOPE is a divine virtue. It is a supernatural habit which God has infused in the soul. God has promised to give us eternal life and the means to attain it. By hope we trust in these promises.

Hope is an act of the will. It is a firm trust in God's goodness. It is a confiding expectation of eternal happiness and the means to attain it. It excludes all disturbing fear of losing this happiness. It is peaceful trust.

Hope does not exclude the fear of our own weakness. We know that God will do His part. We know that He will fulfil His promises. We know that He will provide for us the means of working out our salvation. Yet we

are not certain that we will remain faithful. Human nature is weak and fickle. Hence, St. Paul said: "With fear and trembling work out your salvation."[1]

God has promised us many good things. He will shower graces and blessings upon us. He will forgive our sins. He will be a Father to us in this world and in the next. Hope bids us expect all this with trust and confidence.

Adults can not be saved without actual hope. Man must dispose himself for salvation. But he can not be properly disposed without hope. He must trust that God will save him. He must trust that God will forgive his sins.

The habit of hope is necessary even for infants. It comes with sanctifying grace. It is given in Baptism.

Actual hope is commanded by the

[1] Epistle to the Philippians ii, 12.

natural and the positive law of God. Hope is a necessary means of salvation. The natural law bids us use the means to salvation.

"For we are saved by hope," says St. Paul. "But hope that is seen is not hope. For what a man seeth, why doth he hope for? But if we hope for that which we see not, we wait for it with patience."[2] The prophet says: "Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and hope in thy God always."[3]

The Lord's Prayer is a prayer of hope. Christ commanded us to pray in this manner. "Thus therefore shall you pray: Our Father who art in heaven."[4] He commands us to look upon God as our Father. He commands us to hope in Him.

At certain times the precept of hope binds in a special manner. We

[2] Epistle to the Romans viii, 24, 25.
[3] Osee xii, 6. [4] St. Matthew vi, 9.

should make an act of hope when we are tempted to despair. We should often make acts of hope. It is a holy practice to include an act of hope in our daily prayers. A person may lose hope. He may give way to despair. This is a grave sin. He is bound to turn from his despair and return to God.

In all temptations we should hope in God. When our cross is heavy we should hope in God.

Hope is a fountain head of joy and consolation. In the darkest hour of life hope bids us lift our hearts to heaven. When sorrows overwhelm us hope brings us comfort. When we are sad and dejected hope brings us joy.

Hope points to the realms of eternal bliss. Hope gives us strength and courage. Hope tells us to look forward to our true and everlasting life with God.

CHAPTER VI

Sins Against Hope

THE two great sins against hope are presumption and despair. We know God's goodness. We know His mercy. We know that He is willing to forgive our sins. Hence, we may be tempted to presumption.

Presumption is a rash expectation of being saved without serving God. The presumptuous believe in God. They desire eternal life. Yet they will not strive for it. They neglect their duty toward God. They remain in their sins. But they expect God to save them. They are willing to have Him drag them into heaven. But they will not use the means God has given them to attain it.

There are many sins of presumption.

Some think that they can save their soul by their own powers. They do not depend upon divine grace. Others, again, presume that their sins will be forgiven directly by the merits of Christ. They will not obey the commandments. The mercy of God is enough for them.

The presumptuous sometimes think that they can work vengeance on others by the aid of God's grace. This is generally a form of blasphemy.

Presumption prompts some to expect great sanctity. They have not yet practiced the ordinary virtues. Yet they expect to become great saints with little or no effort.

There is always danger in uncontrolled desires. It is good to desire sanctity. Yet sanctity must be attained by patient prayer and humble struggling.

There is often a temptation to do the extraordinary. The ordinary du-

ties of life are easily neglected. Some neglect the ordinary duties of the Christian life. Yet they undertake great penances. They undergo long fasts. They scourge themselves. They are, in a word, guilty of presumption. They are in great danger. They may indeed reform. Yet they often fall away.

Despair is the opposite of presumption. It is the total loss of hope in God's mercy. Men sometimes feel that God has abandoned them. They lose all hope of salvation.

God does not abandon them. The sinner abandons God. He turns away from Him. But God is ever ready to take him back. He pleads with him to return to Him. He is willing to forgive him. He longs to save him.

The scrupulous are sometimes tempted to despair. They are suffering a great spiritual affliction. They are much troubled over trifles. They ex-

aggerate their faults more and more. Their venial sins often appear to be grievous mortal sins. The more they try to discover their sins the more excited they become. They think they are growing more wicked. They lose courage. They are tempted to give up hope in God.

God will deal kindly with these afflicted souls. He will give them grace to overcome their groundless fears. They will not despair. For they are sincere.

Odium against God is a heinous sin against hope. It is called the odium of abomination. The creature wilfully turns away from God. He will not seek eternal salvation. He has set his heart upon the goods of this world. He prefers earthly treasure to God and eternal life. Thus he shows odium and contempt for God.

Despair is a grave sin. It is a sin against the faithfulness of God. But

odium against God is a more grievous sin. It is a sin against the goodness of God.

Yet despair is the most dangerous of sins. Men lose hope. Then they generally rush headlong into all vices. "And they said: We have no hopes: for we will go after our own thoughts, and we will do every one according to the perverseness of his evil heart."[1]

Pitiable indeed is the plight of those who sink into despair. Hope is gone. They have turned from God who alone could and would help them. It is a foretaste of eternal perdition. In hell there is no hope. Despair shall reign there supreme for all eternity. "Happy is he that hath no sadness of his mind, and who is not fallen away from his hope."[2]

[1] Jeremias xviii, 12.
[2] Ecclesiasticus xiv, 2.

CHAPTER VII

The Precept of Charity

CHARITY is a divine virtue. It is a supernatural habit. It prompts us to love God above all things. By charity we love God for His Own sake. We love ourselves and our neighbor because of God.

Habitual charity is a gift of God. It is inseparably united with sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace brings charity into the soul. Mortal sin drives it from the soul.

Charity may also be considered as an act. It is an act of love. We love God because He is all-good. We love our neighbor as ourselves because of God's love for him.

We love God above all things. We prefer God to all things else. We

would rather lose all else than lose God. Again, we may love God with more fervor than we love any creature.

Our love for God may have three grades. The first grade is simple love for God above all things. It fulfils the precept of charity. It suffices for salvation. By this love we prefer to lose all and to suffer all things rather than commit a mortal sin.

The second grade is more perfect. By this love we prefer to lose all and suffer all rather than commit a deliberate slight offense against God. This embraces a faithful practice of all the virtues.

The third grade is the highest form of love. We prefer to lose all and suffer all things rather than omit anything that is pleasing to God. This means to live in God, and do all things for love of Him.

There are different kinds of love. Love that is called benevolence seeks

the good of the one beloved. Love that is called desire seeks the good of the one that loves.

Benevolent love if referred to God as its object is perfect charity. Referred to God, love of desire is imperfect charity.

By perfect charity we love God because He is good in Himself. By imperfect charity we love God because He will reward us and because we fear His punishment.

Benevolent love is sometimes called friendship. To be friendship, love must be mutual. Friends must wish each other well. They must have some common concern. Their love must be lasting. God loves us. We love God. Hence, Christ could say to His Apostles: "You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you."[1]

God Himself is the primary object

[1] St. John xv, 14.

of charity. The creatures whom God has destined for eternal life form the secondary object of charity. Hence, Christ laid down the law of love. "Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."[2]

God Himself is the motive for our love. Hence, to love God for any of His divine attributes is to have divine charity.

Love of God shows itself in many ways. We rejoice in the infinite perfections of God. We rejoice in God's glory and in His wonderful works. We rejoice in His wisdom, His power, His mercy. This is the joy of love.

Love prompts us to desire the honor and glory of God. We want all men

[2] St. Matthew xxii, 37, 39.

to love Him. We want all men to honor and praise Him more. This is the desire that love begets. Because of this we say: "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost." For the same reason we pray: "Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come."

Because of our love for God we are sad when we think of the sins committed in the world. We detest sin because it is an offense against God. This is the sorrow and sadness of love.

Love prompts us to labor to procure the honor and glory of God. We strive to increase the love of God in our own hearts. We labor to make others love God. We have zeal for the salvation of souls. This is the power of love.

Love prompts us to do the will of God in all things. The honor and glory of God are procured by obedience to God's will. The better men serve

God, the more love do they show Him. This is the obedience of love. Christ Himself said: "If you love me, keep my commandments. . . . He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."[3]

Contrition made perfect by charity is sufficient for justification even before the reception of Baptism and Penance. Yet it always includes a desire to receive the Sacraments. This desire is implicitly contained in perfect charity. For it embraces the desire to do the will of God in all things.

God has told us the power of perfect charity. He says: "I love them that love me."[4] Then our Lord says: "He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father: and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."[5] Christ has told us that love takes away sins:

[3] St. John xiv, 15-21.
[4] Proverbs viii, 17.
[5] St. John xiv, 21.

"Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much."[6]

"And when thou shalt seek there the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him: yet so, if thou seek him with all thy heart, and all the affliction of thy soul."[7] God will forgive those sinners who turn to Him with their whole heart: "The wickedness of the wicked shall not hurt him, in what day soever he shall turn from his wickedness."[8]

All other virtues are based upon actual charity. Charity directs all the virtues to God. Charity prompts man to turn all his actions to God.

Charity prompts the practice of all virtues. Charity is ever active. All the other virtues work through charity. "For this is the charity of God, that we keep his commandments."[9]

[6] St. Luke vii, 47.
[7] Deuteronomy iv, 29.
[8] Ezekiel xxxiii, 12.
[9] 1 Epistle of St. John v, 3.

CHAPTER VIII

Love of Self

GOD has commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."[1] Hence, it is understood that we must love ourselves. We must strive to work out our salvation. This supposes spiritual love of self. We must take proper care of our life and health. This supposes material love of self.

After God we must love all rational creatures. They are destined for eternal glory. We ourselves are rational creatures of God. Hence, we must love ourselves.

Charity toward ourselves is a good incentive for the practice of virtue. We love our immortal soul. Hence, we strive to adorn it with virtues.

[1] St. Matthew xxii, 39.

We are bound to train our mind and heart. Charity toward ourselves commands this. We must fit ourselves for our work in life. Thus we must seek the proper education and culture.

We provide for our bodily welfare. We must use ordinary means to preserve our life. We must take ordinary care of our health. We must use due precaution to avoid bodily dangers.

We should fit ourselves for our state in life. A state in life means a permanent condition. It may be civil or ecclesiastical. Doctors, lawyers, teachers, tradesmen, merchants, laborers, and others have a civil position. Each has his state in life. Priests and religious have embraced the ecclesiastical state.

We may be obliged to elect a special state. Some may feel that they must embrace the religious life to be saved. They are then obliged to do so. Others

may feel that they should enter the married state. It may be necessary for their salvation. They are then bound to embrace this state.

Children are bound to support their parents in their need. To this end it may be necessary to select a particular state. A son may be obliged by filial piety to take up his deceased father's work. He may be bound to support his widowed mother. Yet he would not be bound to select a state that is repulsive to him. He would not be bound to select this particular state if it caused him grave difficulties or losses.

We are bound to provide for our bodily welfare. Ordinarily, this supposes work. Hence, we are bound to work. We are bound to perform some labor.

Labor is generally necessary to enable men to provide the necessaries of life. Those who already possess the

means of livelihood are not obliged to work.

Labor is commanded only as a means of procuring an honest living. Some have special obligations to labor. Parents must provide for their children. Priests and religious must labor for the cause of religion.

"Man is born to labor and the bird to fly,"[2] says holy Job. Yet God has not given a special precept to labor. This precept is contained in the obligation to provide for our temporal welfare.

God said to Adam: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."[3] These words do not command the individual man to labor. They express the punishment for Adam's sin. They are meant for the whole human race. Yet some may procure an honest livelihood without hard labor.

[2] Job v, 7.
[3] Genesis iii, 19.

St. Paul says: "If any man will not work, neither let him eat."[4] This he says of those who were lazy. They refused to work. Yet they had no means of livelihood. They were ancient, able-bodied tramps, it would seem.

Idleness is dangerous. It exposes men to great danger of falling into many sins. "For," says Ecclesiasticus, "idleness hath taught much evil."[5] But occupation is the only means of overcoming idleness. Hence, there is often an obligation to work for the sake of avoiding sin.

Work is balm for the soul. It brings contentment. It wards off weariness of spirit and melancholy. It keeps the mind and body healthful.

God has given us faculties of mind and body. We should use them. Any proper occupation will suffice. Yet it

[4] II Epistle to the Thessalonians iii, 10.
[5] Ecclesiasticus xxxiii, 29.

is not enough to be engaged in games and recreation. These pleasures must be used moderately. Otherwise they become a spiritual danger. They lead to spiritual dissipation. Then follows vice.

Everyone should have concern for the good of humanity. He may have enough for his own needs. Yet he would do well to labor for the good of his fellowmen. He may promote human progress. He may contribute to the furtherance of art and science.

Every man of faith knows the value of life. He hopes the world will benefit, in some measure, by his life upon earth. He labors incessantly to save his immortal soul. He takes proper care of the body God has given him. Yet he also longs to make the world around him better. His life is a life of toil and labor. In this he finds peace and contentment.

CHAPTER IX

Charity Toward Our Neighbor

GOD has commanded us to love our neighbor. Every rational creature is our neighbor. These are the angels and saints in heaven. They are the souls in purgatory. They are all men of earth, whether good or wicked. They are our friends and our enemies. We must love them all. The demons and the damned are the only rational creatures that we are not bound to love. Nor should we love dumb creatures. We should be kind to dumb animals. But they are not capable of love.

We may love our neighbor from natural motives. This is moral charity. We love them because it is virtuous and good to love them. Reason dic-

tates this love. However, it may arise from supernatural grace.

Moral love for our neighbor is defined in Holy Scripture. "All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them."[1] This moral love arises from grace. It is commanded by God. Yet it does not fulfil the precept of divine charity.

God commands us to love our neighbor with the divine virtue of charity. God is the motive of this love. Our neighbor is made to the image of God. He is capable of eternal beatitude. He can enjoy the friendship of God. Hence, he is eminently worthy of our love.

God is pleased when we love our neighbor. This is the love of which Holy Writ says: "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth

[1] St. Matthew vii, 12.

not, abideth in death."[2] Again, it is said: "He that loveth his neighbor, hath fulfilled the law."[3]

We are bound to love our neighbor both by internal and external acts. It is not enough to show kindness toward our neighbor. We must love him in our heart. For we are commanded to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Many bestow favors upon others. They help them. They perform deeds of kindness unto them. Yet perhaps they do not love them. They may even despise them. Their good deeds may come from selfish motives.

Humanitarianism generally differs widely from the virtue of charity. It does not always possess the qualities which St. Paul ascribes to charity. "Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely;

[2] 1 Epistle of St. John iii, 14.
[3] Epistle to the Romans xiii, 8.

is not puffed up; is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil."[4]

The divine precept of charity commands us to love our neighbor with effective love. We should show him deeds of kindness and mercy. We should help him in his need. "He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him; how doth the charity of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth."[5]

We must do good to our neighbor for the love of God. This is divine charity. God rewards this holy virtue. He tell us that he accepts every such good deed as if it were done unto Him directly.

On the last day Christ will say to

[4] 1 Epistle to the Corinthians xiii, 4, 5.
[5] 1 Epistle of St. John iii, 17, 18.

the just: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in: naked, and you covered me: sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came to me.

"Then shall the just answer him, saying: Lord, when did we see thee hungry, and fed thee: thirsty, and gave thee to drink? And when did we see thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and covered thee? Or when did we see thee sick or in prison, and came to thee?

"And the King answering, shall say to them: Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me."[6]

There are many good things that

[6] St. Matthew xxv, 34-40.

we should wish for our neighbor. The greatest of these are spiritual and supernatural blessings. Such are actual graces, virtues and eternal life.

Then we should desire our neighbor's temporal welfare. We should wish him health and bodily well-being. We should wish him knowledge, talents, and the other gifts of nature.

We should wish our neighbor external blessings. Such are a good name, honor and material goods.

To satisfy the precept of charity for our neighbor, a general love that excludes no one suffices. We pray for all in a general way in the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary. This satisfies the precept. We pray that God will give His spiritual blessings to all.

Christ has told us the kind of love we must have for our neighbor. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."[7]

[7] St. Matthew xxii, 29.

This means that we should love our neighbor in the same manner as we love ourselves. We should wish for him the same blessings as we seek for ourselves.

St. Thomas explains this text. "From this," he says, "it is clear that man's love for himself is the pattern of the love which he has for others. It is an example rather than a copy. Hence, by charity a man must love himself more than he loves his neighbor."[8]

However, there are times when we must put our neighbor's good before our own. Sometimes we should sacrifice our own temporal welfare for our neighbor's spiritual necessity. Again, our neighbor's need may be greater than our own. Under certain conditions we are bound to help him even though we suffer thereby.

Charity binds us to help our neighbor

[8] Summa Theologica 2, 2, q. 26, art. 4.

when he is in spiritual need. If he is in extreme necessity we may be bound to help him, even at the risk of our life.

"In this we know the charity of God," says St. John, "because he hath laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."[9] St. Augustine says: "The Christian will not hesitate to lose his temporal life for the eternal life of his neighbor."[10]

Only in the most extreme case would an ordinary person be obliged to give his life for his neighbor. Yet he should love immortal souls more than he loves his earthly life. He should be willing to die to save a soul from hell.

God wants love to reign amongst His children. Any good father wants love to rule in the bosom of his family.

[9] 1 Epistle of St. John iii, 16.

[10] De Mendac, cap. 6. Vol. VI, col. 312, Antwerp, 1701.

God wants us to love one another. He wants us to be faithful, "loving one another with the charity of brotherhood, with honour preventing one another."[11]

Charity is a great power for good. It has led countless thousands to embrace the Faith. It was Christian love that first moved the hearts of the proud pagans in ancient Rome. They cried out: "Behold those Christians, how they live: how they love one another."

[11] Epistle to the Romans, xii, 10.

CHAPTER X

Love of Our Enemies

THOSE who hate us or who seek to injure us are called our enemies.

We are bound to love our enemies. This we are commanded by divine precept. The obligation is indeed included in the general precept of charity. There we are commanded to love all rational creatures capable of eternal beatitude.

Christ expressed the precept of charity toward our enemies: "But I say to you, love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you:

"That you may be children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good, and bad,

and raineth upon the just and the unjust.

"For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans do this?

"And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not even the heathens do this?"[1]

Even the natural law commands us to love our enemies. Our enemy is also our neighbor. The Old Law also commanded charity toward enemies. "If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat," says the Book of Proverbs. "If he thirst, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap hot coals upon his head, and the Lord will reward thee."[2]

We are bound to show the common marks of love toward our enemies. These are the marks of consideration that we show for men in general. We should salute those who salute us.

[1] St. Matthew v, 44-47.

[2] Proverbs xxv, 21, 22.

We should answer those who speak to us.

We should deal with our enemies commercially as we deal with others. We should not exclude them from our alms or our prayers. We should show them ordinary respect. We should save them from loss or injury if we can well do so.

There are cases in which we may by our external deportment conceal our love for our enemies. They may grow bold or insolent because of our consideration. Then we may ignore them for a time, at least. A superior who is offended by a subject may wait for him to make amends. Again, a person may suffer very grave injury from another. He may wish to show how the wrong has pained him. Then he need not immediately show him the ordinary considerations.

Sometimes we are bound to show special marks of love for our enemies.

A good friend has become our enemy. Formerly we showed him special marks of love. To omit these might now be a cause of scandal to others. Here we are bound to show him these special marks of love. Yet we might be excused from this because of some grave reason.

To deny the special marks of love might be a sign of hatred and enmity. Our enemy may wish to be reconciled. He may address us kindly. He may smile upon us. He may show friendliness toward us. Not to return these considerations would certainly be a sign of hatred.

To fail to salute our enemy is not always a sin. It may, however, be a sign of internal hatred. Formerly we were accustomed to salute him. Again, he may be in company with several other persons. We salute the others. We pass him by. Here we would show enmity. It would be a sin.

A mistress may refuse to greet a servant whom she has dismissed for some serious wrong. She may even refuse to return her greeting. Yet it must never be from hatred. It must be from honest motives. She may wish to impress upon the servant the seriousness of the injury which she caused.

Two persons living under the same roof quarrel. They refuse to speak to each other for a short time. They may have had a mere misunderstanding. They may have no real hatred toward each other. Theirs would then be a venial sin. Yet they may thus give scandal to others. This conduct is not in keeping with Christian charity.

We are bound to be reconciled to our enemy. We must forgive the injury he has caused us. We must show by external signs that we have forgiven him. Yet perhaps we are not bound to do this as soon as the offense

has been committed against us. We may be permitted to wait a reasonable time.

We may sometimes defer reconciliation for a short time. By this we intend to show the pain that the injury has caused us. In the meantime we banish hatred and vindictiveness from our hearts.

To defer reconciliation for a long time may be a sin. It may be a sign of enmity. Not so, however, if our enemy refuses to be reconciled.

We may seek just reparation for damage caused us by our neighbor. If our offender refuses to make reparation we may seek satisfaction in court.

We feel no enmity toward him. We wish only that justice be done. We wish only that he be punished for his offense. However, we should not readily seek the vindictiveness of the law. It is always advisable to make a

peaceable reconciliation with our enemy if possible.

We are not obliged to resume the former intimacy that may have existed between us and our enemy. After reconciliation we need only show him ordinary respect and consideration. But our enemy may be our kinsman. Then it is different. We are bound to assume our proper attitude toward him.

To forgive an injury or to pardon an offense means to lay aside hatred and enmity. Our pardon must be both internal and external. It is not enough to feel forgiveness. Our forgiveness should be manifested externally.

As a rule, the person offended is not bound to seek reconciliation. However, he is sometimes bound to do so. He may be bound to do so because of scandal. Perhaps the other party refuses to seek reconciliation. Then,

too, the other party may be in sin. The innocent party would then be bound in charity to seek reconciliation. Thus the other party may be freed from his sin.

Holy Scripture urges us to forgive those who offend us. "Then came Peter unto him, and said: Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus saith to him: I say not to thee, till seven times; but till seventy times seven times."[3]

The offender must seek reconciliation as soon as possible. He may use various means to do so. He may have others intercede for him. He may write. But, if necessary, he is bound to go in person and beg pardon for his offense.

Ordinarily it is not necessary to ask pardon. Reconciliation can take place by special marks of kindness and

[3] St. Matthew xviii, 21, 22.

friendship. The old relations are resumed. Offenses are forgiven.

God forgives us the offenses we commit against Him. He commands us to forgive those who injure us. Christ Himself taught us to say: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Here we ask God to be as merciful and forgiving to us as we are merciful and forgiving to those who offend us.

"And when you shall stand to pray, forgive, if you have aught against any man; that your Father also who is in heaven, may forgive you your sins. But if you will not forgive, neither will your Father that is in heaven, forgive you your sins."[4]

Christ urges us to seek reconciliation. "If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar," He says, "and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee; leave there thy

[4] St. Mark xi, 25, 26.

offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother: and then coming, thou shalt offer thy gift."[5]

Sometimes two persons offend each other. Both are responsible for the trouble. The one who offended the more is bound first to seek reconciliation. But perhaps both have given equal offense. Then the one who started the trouble is bound to seek reconciliation. However, both should be ready to forgive. Both should seek to be reconciled.

Enmity and hatred have no place in the Christian heart. Ours is a religion of love. Charity must rule our lives. We must keep in mind the words of the Apostle: "Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another: even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so do you also."[6]

[5] St. Matthew v, 23, 24.
[6] Epistle to the Colossians iii, 13.

CHAPTER XI

Works of Mercy

IN GENERAL, acts of charity toward our neighbor are called beneficence. An act of charity toward one who is in misery or need is called mercy.

Mercy is a moral virtue. It prompts us to help those who are in suffering or want. It is practical compassion for those who are in need.

Mercy prompts us to help the sick and suffering. It prompts us to help the poor, the ignorant and the sinner.

The precept of charity binds us to help those who are in misery. We are bound in a special manner to help the suffering who are bound to us by kinship. We are also bound in a special manner to help those for whom it is our duty to care.

Works of mercy may be corporal or spiritual. Seven corporal works of mercy are generally mentioned. They are: To feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to ransom the captive, to harbor the harborless, to visit the sick and to bury the dead.

Seven spiritual works of mercy are given. They are: To instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful, to admonish the sinner, to bear wrongs patiently, to forgive all injuries and to pray for the living and the dead.

We are bound to give alms. It is a corporal work of mercy. It is help given to the needy.

There is a divine command to give alms to the needy: "There will not be wanting poor in the land of thy habitation," says Holy Writ, "therefore I command thee to open thy

hand to thy needy and poor brother, that liveth in the land."[1]

"Deal thy bread to the hungry," says the prophet, "and bring the needy and the harborless into thy house: when thou shalt see one naked cover him, and despise not thy own flesh."[2]

Two things are necessary for the giving of alms. Our neighbor must really be in want. Then we must be able to give. We must have something to bestow upon him.

We must help all that are in need. Christ showed great love and mercy for all: "Go then and learn," says He, "what this meaneth: I will have mercy and not sacrifices. For I am not come to call the just, but sinners."[3]

Christ showed special love for sin-

[1] Deuteronomy xv, 11.
[2] Isaias lviii, 7.
[3] St. Matthew ix, 13.

ners. Often those who are in need through their own fault are to be pitied most. The drunkard is reduced to misery by his evil habits. We are doubly bound to help him. We are bound to show him both corporal and spiritual mercy.

Charity does not seek out the good and the virtuous alone for its mercy. Charity asks only if a person is in need. We are not worthy of God's mercy. We are ungrateful sinners. It ill becomes us, then, to question the worthiness of our brother in need. "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."[4]

We should be humble in our almsgiving. "Charge the rich of this world not to be high minded,"[5] says the Apostle. We should show true human sympathy toward our needy brethren. We should save their feelings. We

[4] St. Luke vi, 36.

[5] 1 Epistle to Timothy vi, 17.

should look upon them as our brothers and our equals.

For ordinary almsgiving, we satisfy the precept of charity by giving from our superfluous goods. But our neighbor may be in extreme need. Then we are bound to help him from the things that we need ourselves.

We are not bound to give to everyone that asks an alms from us. Impostors sometimes make a business of begging. However, it is generally possible to learn whether or not a person is in need.

The motive for almsgiving is the love of God. Hence, the beggar may well have the benefit of the doubt. God rewards our good intention to help His holy poor.

Almsgiving is not a remedy for poverty. There will always be poverty in this world. Almsgiving is intended to relieve suffering. It is an act of Christian charity.

Much of the poverty today is undoubtedly due to the greed of others. We must do all in our power to "rescue the poor; and deliver the needy out of the hand of the sinner."[6]

Greed and charity can not abide in the same heart. Nor can injustice and charity dwell together. Those who oppress the poor can have no merit in almsgiving. Those who pay an unjust wage to the poor laborer can not right the wrong by munificent gifts to charity.

"The bread of the needy is the life of the poor: he that defraudeth them thereof, is a man of blood. He that taketh away the bread gotten by sweat, is like him that killeth his neighbor. He that sheddeth blood, and he that defraudeth the laborer of his hire are brothers."[7]

Charity suggests justice to the poor

[6] Psalm lxxxi, 4.

[7] Ecclesiasticus xxxiv, 25-27.

before all else. There are men who grow rich by the hard labor of others. Meanwhile the poor laborer is sunk in poverty. He is perhaps given work only when his employer wishes to give it to him. Or perhaps the employer has kept the greater part of his product.

Of such, Holy Scripture says: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries, which shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted: and your garments are moth eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered: and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up to yourselves wrath against the last days."

"Behold the hire of the laborers, who have reaped down your fields, which by fraud, has been kept back by you, crieth: and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."[8]

[8] Epistle of St. James v, 1-4.

To admonish the sinner is a corporal work of mercy. There are times when we must admonish our neighbor. This is called fraternal correction. It is a private admonition to desist from sinning. It has a twofold motive. It is intended for our neighbor's spiritual good. It is also done out of love for God.

Fraternal correction need not always be made in words. Sometimes it would be imprudent to speak to others of their sins. Often a look of displeasure or an action may best serve to admonish our neighbor.

We are bound by precept to admonish our neighbor. "But if thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother."[9]

It may even be a mortal sin to fail in fraternal correction. A person may

[9] St. Matthew xviii, 15.

be able to save another's soul by a friendly warning. He feels certain that he can deter him. There is no other that can save him. Under these circumstances he would be guilty of a grave sin if he failed to admonish him.

Fraternal correction of a secret sin should be secret. But this admonition may fail. Then it should be made in the presence of one or two others. Finally the guilty one should be denounced to his superior. This is the order laid down by Christ: "If thy brother offend thee go and rebuke him between thee and him alone. . . . And if he will not hear thee take with thee one or two more. . . . And if he will not hear them tell the Church."[10]

There are cases in which sins must be immediately denounced to the superior. This may be the only means of correcting the evil. The sin may be

[10] St. Matthew xxiii, 15-17.

public. It may tend to bring harm upon others. To denounce the person publicly may be the only means of avoiding scandal. In all these cases the sin should be denounced to the superior.

This obligation may arise in colleges and communities. A person may do something that would injure the good name of the institution. His sin may tend to corrupt others. In such cases there is an obligation to denounce the offender to the superior.

We love God. We seek His honor and glory. We love our neighbor. We desire his salvation. Hence, we must be concerned when we know that another offends God. We hate sin. Hence, we must try to deter others from sinning. We must do all that we can to help others to save their immortal souls.

Fraternal correction must always be made in the spirit of meekness and

humility. We must spare the feelings of others as much as possible. We must be careful to guard their good name as far as possible. We must be animated with motives of true charity.

We must avoid the opposite vice in fraternal correction. "Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."[11]

We must know whom we may admonish. There should be well-founded hope that our admonitions will do good. "Rebuke not a scorner, lest he hate thee. Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee."[12]

Our admonition should be given in a true Christian spirit. "The servant of the Lord must not wrangle; but be mild towards all men, apt to teach,

[11] St. Matthew vii, 6.
[12] Proverbs ix, 8.

patient, with modesty, admonishing them that resist the truth."[13]

God will reward us if we help others to save their souls. "My brethren, if any of you err from the truth, and one convert him; he must know that he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins."[14]

[13] 2 Epistle to Timothy ii, 24, 25.
[14] Epistle of St. James v, 19, 20.

CHAPTER XII

Sins Against Charity

IT IS possible to sin against charity both by omission and by commission. To fail to fulfil the precept of charity is a sin of omission. The ordinary sins against charity are hatred, scandal, seduction and cooperation.

To bear hatred toward our neighbor is a sin. It is often grave. We may hate a bad quality in others. We may hate their evil actions. It is a sin to hate the good qualities of others.

Enmity is a sin of hatred. It is opposed to the precept of charity. It is generally a grave sin. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer."[1]

We may feel a natural aversion for a person. We may dislike him. Yet

[1] 1 Epistle of St. John iii, 15.

we wish him no evil. We do not wilfully feel hatred for him. This is not a sin.

To call down evil upon another is malediction. It is commonly called cursing. It arises from anger or hatred. It is a grave sin when it is serious and wilful and deliberate.

Contempt is an offense against the honor and respect which we owe to others. It is a form of hatred. It is serious when shown toward parents or superiors.

It is a grave sin to give scandal to others. It is defined as any improper word or deed that gives occasion for another's spiritual ruin. Scandal is often called spiritual murder.

The omission of a duty may be a scandal to others. Any evil word or deed may give scandal. Even any word or deed that has the appearance of evil may scandalize others.

Scandal may be direct or indirect.

If an action or word is intended to lead another into sin, it is direct scandal. The evil-doer may wish to make the other person offend God. He may wish to lead him to eternal damnation. Then his scandal is called diabolical scandal.

To perform an action which by its very nature will offer an excuse to another to sin is to give scandal.

But a person may take scandal when there is no occasion. Scandal may arise from ignorance or weakness. It is called the scandal of weaklings. Then scandal may arise from mere malice. Evil is taken from good. This is called pharisaical scandal. Christ had expounded the law to the scribes and Pharisees. "Then came his disciples, and said to him: Dost thou know that the Pharisees, when they heard this word, were scandalized? But he answering, said . . . Let them alone; they are blind, and leaders of

the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit."[2]

Scandal may be a mortal sin or a venial sin. If it leads another to commit a mortal sin it is itself a mortal sin. A person may commit only a venial sin. Yet this may cause another to commit a mortal sin. Thus from a venial sin a grave sin of scandal may arise.

Women often give scandal by their dress. A woman may adorn herself for any honest reason. She may wish to find a husband. She may wish to please her husband. Such reasons are licit.

It is a venial sin to adorn the body solely out of levity and vanity. To paint and powder the face so as seduce others is a grave sin. To do so for mere vanity is a venial sin. To dress immodestly is a grave sin. It may incite others to grave sins.

[2] St. Matthew xv, 12, 14.

Much depends upon the customs of a place. A certain form of dress may be considered proper in one place. It may be the cause of grave scandal in another place. Good women are careful not to give scandal. They generally use good judgment and good taste in their dress.

Obscene pictures and statues are a cause of scandal. It is a sin to paint pictures and make statues that are notably obscene.

It is a sin to expose publicly such pictures and statues where all may see them. Pictures and statues of former ages may be placed in public museums and art galleries. Yet the young are not permitted to see them.

Immodest songs and dances are often the cause of scandal. Likewise bad books, newspapers, evil conversations give scandal.

It is sometimes a cause of scandal to attend the funeral of those who have

been denied Christian burial. Such are suicides, members of forbidden societies and others. But perhaps these funerals show no special approbation of the person's life or deeds. They are not accompanied by any special solemnity. Then it is permitted to attend them. Yet it is different when the funeral is intended to express approval of the dead man's false moral or religious principles.

Seduction is the sin of inducing another person to commit sin. Practically it is direct scandal. Yet it is more than the occasion of sin. It is the partial cause of another's sin.

Seduction may be brought about by words, by actions, by writing, by motions or by gestures. It is gravest when it leads a person to commit any grave sin for the first time.

It would not be seduction to invite a thief to steal. To seduce a person means to induce him to commit a sin

which he is not in the habit of committing.

Seduction which leads another to commit a grave sin is a mortal sin. It is a venial sin if it induces another to commit a venial sin.

Seduction contains a twofold malice. It is a sin against charity. It is also a sin against the virtue against which the seduced person sins.

It is never allowed to ask for that which can not be given without sin. It is a sin to ask an official for a favor which he can not grant without breaking his oath of office. It is a sin to ask a witness to give false testimony in court.

We may always persuade another to do a less evil than the one he is bent upon doing. For instance, a man is determined to commit murder. He can not be dissuaded from his criminal intent. A friend persuades him merely to injure the other. Thus he intends not

the injury of the man. He intends to prevent the crime of murder. He is merely trying to lessen the guilt of the action.

It would never be permitted to persuade a person to commit a different crime in order to dissuade him from a criminal intention. A man has made up his mind to commit murder. Another wishes to deter him. He persuades him to commit theft. This is but adding a new guilt to the man's conscience.

It is not permitted to tempt others to sin. However, it is sometimes permitted to leave open to others an occasion for sinning. This can only be for a just and laudable cause.

A father fears his son is stealing money. He wishes to make sure. He wishes to correct him. He leaves money exposed. Then he watches. He has indeed given his son the occasion of sinning. Yet his intention is

to correct him so that he may not contract a sinful habit. It is very important that he should be corrected.

The modern saloon is certainly an occasion of sin. It is generally a haunt of sin. It breeds drunkenness. It is a scandal to the young. Ordinarily, the saloon affords a loafing place for profane men. There is vile and immoral talk. Often, too, the saloon is a gamblers' den.

It is difficult to understand how a good Christian can be the keeper of a saloon. The Church is opposed to this unholy traffic. She advises her sons to keep from it.

We are obliged to repair the injury we may have done by scandal or seduction. This is an obligation of charity. Justice may also demand this reparation.

Public scandal must be repaired publicly. Ordinarily, it suffices to show that we have mended our evil

ways. We give good example to repair the bad example shown.

More is required when scandal affects the teachings of Faith. A person has left the Church. He has taught error. It is not enough for him to return to the Church. He must also try to recall the error he has taught.

It is a sin to cooperate in another's sin. By cooperation is meant assistance. For instance, a man decides to steal. Another watches lest the thief be caught. He is cooperating in the sin of theft.

To furnish another the means of sinning is cooperation. A man decides to get drunk. Another gives him whiskey. He is cooperating in the sin of drunkenness.

Cooperation may be formal or material. It is formal when it includes the intention to help the evil action. This means intentionally to take part in the sin. It is material when there

is no intention to concur in the evil action. Yet in reality assistance is given to the person who commits the sin.

Formal cooperation is always sinful. It contains a twofold malice. It sins against charity. It also contains the guilt of the sin committed by the other party.

In general, architects and contractors may not build heretical churches unless there is a grave reason for doing so. Even then there must be no scandal. Yet with us there can scarcely be scandal from this. The same holds for other temples of error and superstition. Laborers may work on the erection of these buildings without a grave reason. The same may be said of remodeling these buildings.

For any grave reason it is permitted to cooperate in building Mohammedan temples.[3] Yet no matter how

[3] Holy Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, Nov. 21, 1837.

grave the cause it is never permitted to cooperate in building idolatrous temples.

Newspaper men are sometimes employed on papers that are hostile to religion. The paper may be professedly anti-Catholic. Then they should abandon it. Again, the paper may be indifferent in matters of religion. Yet at times it may contain articles against the Church. The men employed in editing the paper are not responsible for this. Nor do they give scandal by remaining with the paper. Hence, they are not bound to leave their positions.

It is not permitted to sell intoxicating liquor to one who is evidently getting drunk. However, no one is bound to suffer great inconvenience to prevent another's sin.

It is not generally permitted to keep a dance hall where liquors are sold. Ordinarily, these are places of

sin. It is hardly possible to keep them proper.

It is permitted to sell weapons, poison and other dangerous things. It may often be foreseen that they will be used for evil. In particular cases they should be refused, if possible, when it is certain they are to be used for an evil purpose.

It is not permitted to sell things that are intended solely for evil purposes. Such are contrivances for prevention. Such also are drugs and remedies that are used solely to counteract the proper course of nature.

It may be permitted for grave reasons to contribute money that will be used for a heretical church. By this it is not intended to approve error. Otherwise it would be cooperation in heresy.

Sin is the greatest evil in the world. It is the cause of all other evils. It is the only real evil. Hence, we must ever struggle against it. We must

avoid sin ourselves. We must also remember that we have certain duties to help others avoid sin.

Love is the fountain of eternal life. We love God. We love our neighbor as ourselves. God wants all men to be saved. Thus we strive for salvation. We also help our neighbor to save his soul. We try to keep every spiritual danger away from him. For he is our brother.

God grant us grace to follow that beautiful command of His: "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."[4]

[4] St. Matthew v, 16.

CHAPTER XIII

The Ten Commandments

GOD gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. They were carved on two stone tablets. They were given on Mount Sinai amid thunder and lightning.

The Book of Exodus describes the great solemnity with which God gave the Commandments to Moses. The Israelites had departed from Egypt three months before. They were now encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai.

"And all Mount Sinai was on a smoke: because the Lord was come down upon it in fire, and the smoke arose from it as out of a furnace: and all the mount was terrible.

"And the sound of the trumpet grew by degrees louder and louder, and was

drawn out to a greater length; Moses spoke, and God answered him.

"And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, in the very top of the Mount, and he called Moses unto the top thereof."[1]

"And the Lord spoke all these words: I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve *them;* I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me: And shewing mercy

[1] Exodus xix, 18-20.

unto thousands that love me, and keep my commandments.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain.

"Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labor, and shalt do all thy works. But on the seventh is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.

"Honour thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be longlived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee.

"Thou shalt not kill.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery.

"Thou shalt not steal.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house: neither shalt thou desire his wife, nor his servant, nor his handmaid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his."[2]

The Sacred Writer describes the scene that followed: "And all the people saw the voices and the flames, and the sound of the trumpet, and the mount smoking: and being terrified and struck with fear, they stood afar off, saying to Moses: Speak thou to us, and we will hear: let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die.

"And Moses said to the people: Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that the dread of him might be in you, and you should not sin.

[2] Exodus xx, 1-16. See also Deuteronomy v, 6-21.

And the people stood afar off. But Moses went to the dark cloud wherein God was."[3]

God gave many other precepts to Moses. These were to guide the Israelites. They were the chosen people. God had said to them: "If therefore you will hear my voice, and keep my covenant, you shall be my peculiar possession above all people: for all the earth is mine. And you shall be to me a priestly kingdom, and a holy nation."[4]

"And the Lord said to Moses: Come up to me into the mount and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and the law, and the commandments which I have written: that thou mayest teach them."[5]

Then Moses went up into the Mountain. He remained there forty

[3] Exodus xx, 18-21.
[4] Exodus xix, 5, 6.
[5] Exodus xxiv, 12.

days and forty nights. The people were awaiting his return. They grew impatient. They lost faith in Moses. Then they fell into idolatry. They made a golden calf. This they adored.

"And Moses returned from the mount, carrying the two tables of the testimony in his hand, written on both sides, and made by the work of God: the writing also of God was graven in the tables. . . . And when he came nigh to the camp, he saw the calf, and the dances: and being very angry, he threw the tables out of his hand and broke them at the foot of the mount."[6]

Afterwards Moses returned to the mount. He begged God to forgive the people their terrible crime. "And after this he said: Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the former, and I will write upon them the words

[6] Exodus xxxii, 15-19.

which were in the tables, which thou brokest."[7]

"And the Lord said to Moses: Write thee these words by which I have made a covenant both with thee and with Israel. And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights: he neither ate bread nor drank water, and he wrote upon the tables the ten words of the covenant. And when Moses came down from the mount Sinai, he held the two tables of the testimony. . . . And all the children of Israel came to him: and he gave them in commandment all that he had heard of the Lord in mount Sinai."[8]

There are different views as to the division of the Ten Commandments. Some make two commandments out of the First Commandment. Then they make one commandment out of the

[7] Exodus xxxiv, 1.
[8] Exodus xxxiv, 27-32.

Ninth and the Tenth Commandments. But all agree that there are ten.

The Ten Commandments set down our duties to God and to our neighbor. The first three define our duty toward God. To these the fourth is often added. For our parents represent God in a special manner.

The other commandments define our duty toward our neighbor. "God spoke much to Moses," says St. Augustine, "yet He gave Moses but two stone tablets. They are called the tablets of the testimony which were to be in the Ark. Indeed if we examine the matter carefully we see that all the other commandments of God depend upon these Ten Commandments which were written on two stone tablets. Then again, we understand how these Ten Commandments are comprised in those two; namely, the love of God and the love of our

neighbor in which dependeth the whole law and the prophets."[9]

"Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment.

"And the second is like unto this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets."[10]

Christ confirmed the Ten Commandments. They form the basis of all moral law in the Church. "Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets," says Christ. "I come not come to destroy but to fulfil.

"For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one

[9] St. Augustine, Quaestiones in Exodum, Vol. III, col. 346; Antwerp, 1700.

[10] St. Matthew xxii, 37-40.

tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled.

"He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But he that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."[11]

[11] St. Matthew v, 17-19.

CHAPTER XIV

The First Commandment

THE First Commandment is: "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

"Thou shalt not have strange gods before me.

"Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth.

"Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve *them;* I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me:

"And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."[1]

The First Commandment commands us to love and honor God. It forbids us to show honor to false gods. It forbids us to adore idols or images.

By the virtue of religion we obey the First Commandment. Religion is a moral virtue by which we pay homage to God. It prompts us to honor Him as the Creator and Ruler of all things.

We must render homage to God. We must show Him reverence and respect. We must pray to Him. We must show Him external worship. We must adore Him.

Properly speaking, adoration is an external act of religion. Thereby we attest God's supreme excellence and dominion. We also attest our complete dependence upon Him. Further-

[1] Exodus xx, 2-6.

more, we attest our complete subjection to Him. We adore God alone.

We venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints. We venerate the angels. Yet we do not worship them as we worship God. To God alone belongs adoration. We show more veneration for the Blessed Virgin than for any other creature. Yet we do not adore her.

Adoration embraces an internal act of the intellect and will. We acknowledge God's excellence and dominion. We acknowledge our dependence upon Him and our subjection to Him.

Adoration is manifested by external actions. Such are acts of sacrifice, prostrations, bowing the head, genuflections.

There is also a relative worship. Thus we adore the crucifix. This worship is intended for God. It is not shown to the crucifix proper. Thus it is with all veneration that it is shown

to statues and relics. It is but relative. Worship may be public or private. Public worship is instituted by the Church. It is offered in the name of the Church. Private worship is not instituted by the Church. At least, it is not offered in the name of the Church.

Public worship can only be offered by a person properly authorized by the Church. For a layman to recite the divine office is private worship. For a priest to recite it is public worship.

We are bound by divine precept to adore God. Even the natural law binds us to adore God. We are bound to show Him the most perfect worship. For He is infinitely good and infinitely perfect. "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve."[2]

Devotion is also an act that pertains

[2] St. Matthew iv, 10.

to the virtue of religion. Happy indeed are they who possess devotion for God. Devotion is a readiness of the will to serve God. It is a promptness in doing all that can please God.

"We can also show devotion toward the saints and the faithful departed. We can have devotion even for the living. Thus faithful Christians are devoted to priests and religions. Yet this devotion does not stop here. It passes on to God. We venerate God in the servants of God."[3]

We have tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. We are devoted to her as children to a loving mother. For she is the Mother of fair love. We are devoted to all the angels and saints. In them we show homage to God.

Praise for God is also an act that belongs to the virtue of religion. Praise tends directly to God's honor. "Bless-

[3] Summa Theologica 2, 2, q. 82, ad 3m.

ing the Lord, exalt him as much as you can: for he is above all praise. When you exalt him put forth all your strength, and be not weary; for you can never go far enough."[4]

It is well to meditate much on the supreme excellence of God. His dominion is infinite. He holds the universe in His hand. He watches over the millions of stars and planets. He rules the destinies of His creatures. Even the smallest instinct is guided by His omnipotence.

It is our great joy and privilege to adore and serve God. It is consoling to know that the omnipotent God will accept homage from us. "He that adoreth God with joy, shall be accepted and his prayer shall approach even to the clouds."[5]

[4] Ecclesiasticus xliii, 33, 34.
[5] Ecclesiasticus xxxv, 20.

CHAPTER XV

Prayer

PRAYER is the lifting up of the mind to God. It is converse with God. By prayer we ask God for His graces and blessings. We beg of Him all the benefits that we need for soul or body.

By prayer we talk with God. We speak to Him as a child speaks to a kind father. We tell Him our needs. We tell Him our trials and our temptations. We ask His help in all our necessities.

By prayer we thank God for His goodness toward us. We thank Him for all the divine favors that He has bestowed upon us.

"I called upon the Lord, the father of my Lord, that he would not leave

me in the day of my trouble, and in the time of the proud without help.

"I will praise thy name continually, and will praise it with thanksgiving, and my prayer was heard.

"And thou hast saved me from destruction, and hast delivered me from the evil time.

"Therefore, I will give thanks and praise thee, and bless the name of the Lord."[1]

Above all, we beg spiritual blessings from God. Our soul is our first and greatest concern. We ask God to give us every grace to save our soul. Especially do we ask Him for the grace of perseverance.

Prayer is an act of religion. We ask God for His favors and blessings. Thus we acknowledge His power and His love. We call upon Him as the Author of all good.

We adore God when we pray. We

[1] Ecclesiasticus li, 14-17.

acknowledge His supreme excellence. We profess our complete subjection to Him.

We pray also for the remission of sins. This is propitiatory prayer. "My son, hast thou sinned? Do so no more: but for thy former sins also pray that they may be forgiven thee."[2]

We pray for one another. This is intercessory prayer. We beg graces and blessings for others. We ask God to help them save their souls. St. James urges the faithful to "pray for one another, that you may be saved. For the continual prayer of a just man availeth much."[3]

"Wherefore also we pray always for you," says St. Paul, "that our Lord would make you worthy of his vocation and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith in power."[4]

[2] Ecclesiasticus xxi, 1. [3] Epistle of St. James v, 16.
[4] 2 Epistle to the Thessalonians i, 11.

"Dearly beloved," says St. John, "concerning all things, I make it my prayer, that thou mayest proceed prosperously, and fare well as thy soul doth prosperously."[5]

Prayer may be either vocal or mental. Vocal prayer is expressed in words. But it must come from the heart. Mere words would not constitute prayer. Vocal prayer need not be audible to others. The words may be formed with the tongue and lips without any perceptible sound.

Vocal prayer may be public or private. Prayer offered in the name and authority of the Church is public prayer. Prayer offered in the name and authority of the one praying is private prayer. Public prayers can only be instituted by the authority of the Church.

Vocal prayer may be individual or common. When several persons unite

[5] 3 Epistle of St. John i, 2.

in prayer, they are said to offer common prayer. This form of prayer is especially pleasing to God. "For where there are two or three gathered together in my name," says Christ, "there am I in the midst of them."[6]

Mental prayer is offered in the mind and will alone. It is not expressed in words. This form of prayer is generally called meditation.

By mental prayer we turn our mind to God. We may think about the great truths of Faith. We may ponder on the mysteries of Faith. We may dwell in thought upon the love and goodness of God. We may think about the virtues of the saints. There are numberless holy thoughts upon which our mind can dwell in mental prayer.

Meditation is a fruitful form of prayer. It makes the soul ripe in faith and piety. It produces the

[6] St. Matthew xviii, 20.

spirit of prayer. It is a sure road to sanctity.

It is a great blessing to be able to practice mental prayer. It is the science of the saints. We must learn this practice by patient effort. We can say with the disciples: "Lord, teach us to pray."[7]

There are numberless subjects for meditation. There are the great truths of Faith. There are the infinite perfections of God. There are the virtues. There are the lives of the saints. There are the events in the life of our blessed Lord. There are His labors, His trials, His sufferings.

It is well to follow method in meditation. There must be preparation.

"Before prayer, prepare thy soul; and be not as a man that tempteth God."[8]

Prepare the soul for prayer. Cast

[7] St. Luke xi, 1.

[8] Ecclesiasticus xviii, 23.

out all obstacles. Remove pride, hypocrisy and worldly thoughts. In the spirit of humility we turn to the subject upon which we are going to meditate.

The evening before, we read carefully the subject of meditation for the next day. In the morning, we call it to mind. We keep it in our mind whilst we are dressing.

We say our morning prayers. With recollection of mind we begin to think upon the subject of our meditation. We are kneeling before God. We are communing with Him. We are in His holy Presence. We consecrate ourselves to Him. All these thoughts course through our mind.

We ask for grace to meditate well. We ask God to drive vain thoughts from our mind. We ask for humility. We ask for light and strength.

Now we call to mind the pious thoughts we have read. We ponder

upon them. We think of what each idea means. We consider the circumstances. We think of the persons mentioned.

We center our thoughts on the truths contained in the subject. We take them one by one. We consider how these truths should influence our lives.

Our obligations come to our mind. Then we think of the motives that should impel us. We draw lessons from the subject upon which we are meditating.

Often it brings to our mind the things that hinder our practice of virtue. Perhaps it reveals to us the means of avoiding dangers. It may suggest new motives for fidelity and devotion.

At the end we make good resolutions. Sometimes it is well to make but one firm resolution. We will resolve to avoid certain occasions of sin. We

will resolve to avoid a certain fault today.

Again, in our soul we speak to God. We ask for grace to keep our resolutions. We thank Him for helping us to pray. Then we say, perhaps, the Our Father and the Hail Mary.

Meditation is a beautiful form of prayer. It is a practical form of mental prayer. Contemplation is the highest form of mental prayer. It is essentially the prayer of love. It was practiced by all the great saints.

There are contemplative Orders of men and women in the Church. These faithful souls devote their whole lives to prayer and meditation. They are great benefactors to the human race. Theirs is the greatest work to which mortals can consecrate their lives. They sit at the feet of God. They call down God's blessings upon their fellowmen.

All Christians pray daily. Prayer is

the basis of all virtue. We pray in the morning. We thank God for having preserved us during the night. We consecrate the new day to Him. We beg Him to keep us from sin for this day.

We pray in the evening. We close the day with prayer. We thank God for all the graces He has bestowed upon us during the day. We commend ourselves to His care for the night.

We pray before and after meals. We ask God to bless our bodily food. We thank Him for all the benefits He bestows upon us.

We pray in time of trial and suffering. Here we follow the example of Jesus in Gethsemane. "He fell on his face praying, and saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."[9]

We pray in our sorrow and distress.

[9] St. Matthew xxvi, 39.

"The sorrows of death have compassed me: and the perils of hell have found me. I met with trouble and sorrow: and I called upon the name of the Lord. O Lord, deliver my soul."[10]

We pray when we suffer injustice from others. "Have mercy on me, O God, for man hath trodden me under foot; all the day long he hath afflicted me fighting against me."[11]

We pray when we have fallen into sin. "And now, O Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, the soul in anguish, and the troubled spirit crieth to thee: Hear, O Lord, and have mercy, for thou art a merciful God, and have pity upon us; for we have sinned before thee."[12]

We pray to God in time of temptation. When the evil spirits surround us, well may we cry out: "O Lord,

[10] Psalm cxiv, 3, 4.
[11] Psalm lv, 2.
[12] Baruch iii, 1, 2.

father and sovereign ruler of my life, leave me not to their counsel: nor suffer me to fall by them. . . . Lest my ignorance increase, and my offenses be multiplied, and my sins abound, and I fall before my adversaries, and my enemy rejoice over me."[13]

We pray in all our necessities. God is our Heavenly Father. He is ever faithful. He is ever ready to help us. God says to those who trust in Him: "I am the Lord thy God, who take thee by the hand, say to thee: Fear not, I have helped thee."[14]

Christ Himself taught us to pray. "Thus therefore shall you pray," He says, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name."[15] He teaches us to call God our Father. This beautiful prayer begs for us all blessings for both soul and bodv. It is called the Lord's Prayer.

[13] Ecclesiasticus xxiii, 1-3.
[14] Isaias xli, 13. [15] St. Matthew vi, 9.

The Hail Mary is a beautiful prayer. It is also called the Angelical Salutation. In this holy prayer we show love and veneration for the Blessed Virgin Mary. We praise Christ. We beg the intercession of His Holy Mother.

The Apostles' Creed is a prayer of faith. It is also called the Symbol of Faith. It comes down from Apostolic times. By this prayer we explicitly profess our belief in the principal doctrines of Faith. It is a sublime profession of Faith.

The Confiteor is a prayer of penitence. We confess our sins to God. We acknowledge our sinfulness before the Blessed Virgin, the Apostles, saints and angels. Then we beg them to intercede for us. We beg God to have mercy on us.

The Acts of Faith, Hope, Love and Contrition are also our daily prayers. By these holy prayers we excite the

virtues of faith, hope, love and contrition in our soul.

The Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Apostles' Creed, the Confiteor, and the Acts of Faith, Hope, Love and Contrition are included in our morning and evening prayers.

There are also Litanies. These are prayers of praise to God and the saints. We beg God's help and mercy. The Litany of the Sacred Heart appeals especially to the love of Christ. The Litany of the Holy Name honors the Sacred Name of Jesus.

The Litany of the Blessed Virgin is a prayer of praise and veneration for the Mother of Christ. We also beg her prayers and intercession. It is also called the Litany of Loretto. It originated in the holy house at Loretto.

The Litany of the Saints is a prayer by which we call upon the saints. We beg them to pray for us. We ask them to intercede for us with God.

Prayer unites us with God. It is a bond of love and confidence. We yearn to communicate with our loved ones on earth. When we are separated from them, we write to them. We watch eagerly for word from them.

God is preeminently our Loved One. We seem to be afar off. Yet every moment we can communicate with Him. We can kneel at His feet any hour of the day or night. He leans over us with love, as it were, to hear our words. Heart to heart we speak with Him.

With tender mercy God hears our prayers. We are His Own children. He loves us. "Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace: that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid."[16]

[16] Epistle to the Hebrews, iv, 16.

CHAPTER XVI

The Power of Prayer

WE MUST be attentive to our prayers. We must have our mind on what we are doing. We must think of what we are saying. We must remember that we are speaking with God.

Wilful distraction in prayer is a venial sin. It is a lack of respect for God. We address Him. Then we wilfully turn our thoughts to something else. Prayers said with wilful distraction are of no worth.

Distractions will come in spite of us. We try to keep our mind on our prayers. Yet our mind will wander. We are weak. But God accepts our good efforts. He accepts our prayers.

"For thou, O Lord, art sweet and

mild: and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee."[1] He hears our prayers. Yet He knows what is best for us. Sometimes He will not grant our request. He knows that what we seek is not good for us.

God is a loving Father to us. He is all-wise. At times He seems to turn a deaf ear to our prayers. Yet we must trust in Him.

Prayer always produces its effect. It is never lost. No sincere prayer was ever uttered in vain. Prayer is not a command. It is a petition. We ask God to be kind and merciful to us.

God loves us. He is ready to give us every good. Hence, our prayers must always conform to the will of God. His will be done. Like our Blessed Lord, we pray: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass

[1] Psalm lxxxv, 5.

from me. Nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt."[2]

God has promised to hear our prayers. Our Saviour made this solemn promise: "Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you."[3]

Prayer infallibly produces its effect. Yet it must be true prayer. We must pray in union with Christ. "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that I will do."[4]

True prayer can only ask that which will help save our soul. Hence, when we ask for spiritual favors, our prayer will infallibly produce its effect. God may not give us the particular favor we ask. He may give us other favors better suited to our spiritual needs.

We may pray for temporal favors. Yet we do not always receive them.

[2] St. Matthew xxvi, 39.
[3] St. John xvi, 23.
[4] St. John xiv, 13.

They may seem good to us. We may intend to use them for the benefit of religion. We may intend to bestow them all upon the poor. But God knows best. He often refuses them.

True prayer must be based on faith and hope. He who would pray properly "let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."[5] Our Blessed Lord Himself said: "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."[6]

We must pray with perseverance. We can not set limits about the actions of God. He will do all in His Own good time. If we need the graces now He will grant them. He knows best when to bless us. If we are in earnest we will not cease. We will send up our sighs and petitions to Him until He sees fit to grant our request.

[5] Epistle of St. James i, 6.
[6] St. Matthew xxi, 22.

"The prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds; and till it come nigh, he will not be comforted; and he will not depart till the most High behold."[7]

Those who are in sin should pray for grace and pardon. The sinner's prayer for mercy is heard. Yet great is the prayer of the just. "If you abide in me," says Christ, "and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will and it shall be done unto you."[8]

God hears the prayers of those who love Him. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the just: and his ears unto their prayers. . . . The just cried and the Lord heard them: and delivered them out of all their troubles."[9]

Prayer is necessary for salvation to all that have reached the use of reason.

[7] Ecclesiasticus xxxv, 21.
[8] St. John xv, 7.
[9] Psalm xxxiii, 16-18.

God has put the grace of salvation at our disposal. He has given us reason and free will. By these faculties we can choose or reject His grace. He does not force salvation upon us. He says to us: "Ask and you shall receive."[10] Hence, if we do not ask we will not receive. To fail to ask is to reject.

The divine precept of prayer is clearly stated many times in Holy Writ. "Love God all thy life and call upon him for thy salvation."[11]

"And now pray ye to the God of all, who hath done great things in all the earth, who hath increased our days from our mother's womb, and hath done with us according to his mercy."[12]

St. Paul urges the faithful to pray with confidence: "Be nothing solicitous: but in everything, by prayer

[10] St. John xvi, 24.
[11] Ecclesiasticus xiii, 18.
[12] Ecclesiasticus l, 24.

and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God."[13]

"Ask, and it shall be given you," says Christ. "Seek and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you."[14]

Prayer is the watchword of the faithful. "Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of man."[15]

[13] Epistle to the Philippians iv, 6.
[14] St. Matthew vii, 7.
[15] St. Luke xxi, 36.

CHAPTER XVII

Sins Against Religion

RELIGIOUS indifference is a common sin against the virtue of religion. Men neglect their duty toward God. They ignore God, as it were. They do not learn the teachings of Faith. They do not worship God. They do not pray.

The lives of the indifferent are empty. They have a vague belief in God. They often follow the dictates of natural religion. Perhaps they show respect and justice to their fellowmen. Yet they live as though they were independent of God.

They assume that God demands no service of them. They follow the easy course. They ease their conscience by saying that they commit no sin.

They should remember that it is a grave sin to fail to do the will of God. It is a grave sin not to accept the teachings of Christ. It is a grave sin not to hear the Church: "And if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican."[1]

They should remember that God requires service of them. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways, and love him, and serve the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul."[2]

The words of the prophet might well be applied to the indifferent: "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and ye gates thereof, be very desolate, saith the Lord.

"For my people have done two evils. They have forsaken me, the

[1] St. Matthew xviii, 17.

[2] Deuteronomy x, 12.

fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."[3]

Irreligion is directly opposed to the virtue of religion. It is a grave sin. It generally embraces unbelief and ingratitude to God. It hardens the heart. It makes men wicked.

Irreligion often prompts men to persecute the Church. It makes them enemies of virtue. It leads many to despair. To the irreligious God says: "Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people? Is not He thy Father, that hath possessed thee, and made thee, and created thee?"[4]

Superstition is a sin against religion. It is excess in worship. It is undue form of worship. It may be false worship or it may be superfluous worship.

All false worship is superstition.

[3] Jeremias ii, 12, 13.

[4] Deuteronomy xxxii, 6.

Any deceit in worship is superstition. It would be superstition to proclaim false miracles or revelations. A lay person pretends to be a priest. He goes through the formula of saying Mass or of giving absolution. His action is superstition.

Superstition of false worship is generally a grave sin. It is an insult to God. It hinders true religion.

To worship God contrary to the custom of the Church is superstition. It is called vain or superfluous worship. A person thinks there should be a certain number of candles burning on the altar when he hears Mass. He thinks he should hear Mass at a certain hour so as to gain a special grace. He thinks that a certain number of prayers will obtain a favor without fail. These are acts of superstition.

The "chain prayer" is a common superstition. A prayer is sent to a

person. He is enjoined to recite it several times. Then he is told that he must send it to several other persons. He is then to obtain his favor without fail. This is vain worship. It is superstition.

Superstition of superfluous worship is generally only a venial sin. It often comes from ignorance or simple-mindedness. Then it may not be a sin.

Our prayers and our devotions must always be in keeping with the mind of the Church. We should guard against innovations in devotions. Our service to God must be reasonable and prudent.

Idolatry is a grave sin of superstition. It is the act of paying divine homage to a creature. It is always a grave insult to God. It renders creatures worship that belongs to God alone.

Idolatry is a sin against the virtue of religion. It is also a sin against Faith. It may also contain grave

malice toward God. Even the external act of idolatry is a grave sin.

St. Paul describes the sad lot of idolaters. "They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things.

"Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness, to dishonour their own bodies among themselves.

"Who changed the truth of God into a lie; and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."[5]

Divination is a form of superstition. It is also called fortune-telling. It seeks to discover future things and hidden things. It seeks to discover things known only to God. It seeks to acquire this knowledge by vain means.

[5] Epistle to the Romans i, 23, 25.

The demon may be invoked implicitly. The person does not call upon him. Yet he seeks secret knowledge. He uses means that could not, of their own nature, make these things known. Hence, he must depend upon some greater power. But he could not expect help from God or the angels in these vain things. Thus he is implicitly putting his trust in the devil.

God reprobates these vain strivings after hidden knowledge. But the devil gladly enters into them. He does not wait for an invitation. He hopes to make foolish men honor him. He would fain take the place of God in their lives.

There are many forms of divination. In certain forms there is an express pact with the devil. Oneiromancy is a form of divination by dreams. Necromancy is a form of divination through the dead. It is spiritism in its modern form.

Pythonism is divination through persons possessed by the devil. The name is derived from the Delphic priestess called Pythia. Geomancy is the supposed art of discovering hidden things by signs appearing on material objects. Hydromancy follows signs found in water. Pyromancy takes its signs from fire. Aruspices are the signs found in the entrails of animals that have been sacrificed to the pagan gods.

There are other forms of divination. These are practiced through only an implicit pact with the devil. Judicial astrology seeks to discover hidden knowledge by observing the stars. Augury is divination from the sounds made by animals and the songs of birds. Auspices are taken from the flight of birds.

Omens are signs that are taken from chance. A word is expressed unwittingly. A funeral passes. An animal

crosses the road. These are taken for omens. They are supposed to point to good or evil, as the case may be. To pass under a ladder is considered an unlucky sign. When thirteen sit at table it is said that one will die. These and many other superstitions are common today.

Chiromancy is palmistry. Hidden things are told by reading the lines in the palm of the hand. Physiognomy takes its signs from the face.

Casting lots is also used for divination. Pulling straws, cutting cards, opening a book at random, and many other forms of chance belong to this form of superstition. By these means it is sought to discover hidden knowledge.

It is, however, allowed to resort to casting lots for the purpose of deciding disputes. Likewise, it is allowed to draw lots to see who is to do a certain thing or who is to have something.

There is nothing of superstition in this.

There are many superstitious beliefs prevalent amongst the people. The horseshoe is a sign of luck. The rabbit's foot and other things are carried for luck. Friday is an unlucky day. Thirteen is an unlucky number. These are generally harmless beliefs. The people simply accept them as traditional. They have no thought of putting faith in such things.

There are many other such ideas. It is supposed to be a sign of bad luck if a black cat crosses your path. It is good luck if a rabbit crosses the road before you. If you stumble at your doorstep some evil is about to befall you. These things are vain and empty. They are foolish rather than sinful. Yet they may be harmful.

Divination exists especially amongst pagan peoples. It abounds amongst the nations of the East. Man naturally

wants to know the future. He is not satisfied with his little knowledge of the present. Hence, the pagan nations all have their seers and their soothsayers.

The Sacred Writer warns the Israelites: "Neither let there be found amongst you any one that shall expiate his son or daughter making them to pass through the fire: or that consulteth soothsayers, or observeth dreams and omens, neither let there be any wizard, nor charmer, nor any one that consulteth pythonic spirits, or fortune-tellers, or that seeketh the truth from the dead.

"For the Lord abhorreth all these things, and for these abominations he will destroy them at thy coming."[6]

A person may take part in divination from thoughtlessness or levity. He may go to a fortune-teller as a joke. He may have his fortune told. Yet

[6] Deuteronomy xviii, 10-12.

he is putting himself in danger. Thus far, at least, his action is sinful.

Belief in dreams is, ordinarily, a form of superstition. Dreams are a natural psychic effect. The natural dream perhaps always refers to the past.

There can be supernatural dreams. God can reveal the future in dreams. Such were the dreams mentioned in the Bible.

We may not readily think that a dream is from God. Such a dream would be in the nature of a private revelation. It would be miraculous. This privilege was granted to some of the saints. But it is scarcely granted to ordinary people.

The devil can incite dreams in men. These dreams might embrace more than ordinary human knowledge. Hence, there would be danger of thinking that they were from God.

Dreams may influence us in indiffer-

ent matters. This is not sinful. We may intend to take a pleasure trip. We dream about a railroad wreck. Then we decide to abandon our trip. We do not really believe in the dream. We simply give way to our fears. Again, a man dreams that there is a treasure buried in his garden. He goes out next day to dig for it. He does not put blind faith in the dream. Yet he is curious. He hopes that by some chance there may be a treasure there.

We all yearn to know the future. But this yearning must be tempered by faith. In eternity the desires of our heart will be satisfied. There we shall be with God. The darkness of our intellect will be cleared away. We shall possess wondrous knowledge. The light of God's Beatific Vision will shed splendor upon our minds. We shall be filled with knowledge. That is our hope and our joy upon earth.

CHAPTER XVIII

Magic

MAGIC is a form of superstition. It is called the art of magic. It seeks to produce effects that are beyond the power of natural means.

Magic is attributed to the express or implicit intervention of the devil. It produces effects that are beyond human powers. It uses vain and senseless means that could not be accepted by God. Hence, it must depend upon diabolical power for any effects that are really beyond the scope of human agencies.

Magic embraces the art of acquiring knowledge without study. This is a sort of infused knowledge. Supposedly it is gained by looking upon certain figures and by uttering certain words.

Magic embraces the art of curing diseases by signs and charms. Holy objects are also used to cure diseases. Rings and lockets are also worn to cure and ward off diseases.

The natives of the East worship many objects that are supposed to have power to cure diseases. These are called fetiches. Animals are sometimes worshiped as fetiches.

The ancient Chaldeans and Babylonians used many charms, spells and incantations against bodily ailments. Thus they thought to ward off every form of evil.

Magic is also used to cause harm to others. It is then called "black magic." All sorts of evils were inflicted upon persons by this black art.

Witchcraft belongs to the black art. Belief in witches was once common amongst all peoples. Witches were supposed to ride through the air on broomsticks. They were accused of

causing serious harm by their spells. Thus they brought afflictions upon people. They brought diseases upon cattle. They blighted crops and fruits.

It was supposed that witches could even cause death by their spells. Then they concocted diverse potions. They could turn love into hate. They could also turn hate into love. Many other powers were ascribed to them.

The possibility of witches can not be doubted. St. Paul enumerates "witchcrafts" amongst the works of the flesh.[1] The Church has never decided the reality of witchcraft. She has never declared that real witches ever existed.

The practice of witchcraft is a historical fact. Yet it is not certain that this practice was a preternatural art. Much may have been due to imagination. Then deceit may have played an important part in the practice.

[1] Epistle to the Galatians v, 20.

Those who practiced witchcraft were severely punished in bygone days. The Church also made strict laws against them. She turned many of them over to the secular power. There they received the punishment that the civil law had decreed for them.

In many cases witches were put to death by burning. Others were imprisoned for life. They generally received severe punishment.

The Church forbade belief in witchcraft. She forbade the practice of the art. This does not imply, however, that she accepted the reality of witches.

Magic seeks to foretell what is to be lucky or unlucky. Conjectures are made from chance happenings.

"Catholic theology defines magic as the art of performing actions beyond the power of man, with the aid of powers other than the Divine, and condemning it and any attempt at it as a grievous sin against the virtue of

religion, because all magical performances, if undertaken seriously, are based on the expectation of interference by demons or lost souls. Even if undertaken out of curiosity, the performance of a magical ceremony is sinful, as it either proves a lack of faith or is a vain superstition. The Catholic Church admits in principle the possibility of interference in the course of nature by spirits other than God, whether good or evil, but never without God's permission. As to the frequency of such interferences, especially by malignant agencies, at the request of man, she observes the utmost reserve."[2]

[2] The Catholic Encyclopedia, Occult Art, Vol. XI, p. 199.

CHAPTER XIX

Spiritism and Ghosts

SPIRITISM is a superstitious practice. It is the art of conversing with the spirits. The spirits reveal hidden knowledge. Yet they do not communicate directly with the persons who are seeking information. They make their revelations known through a "medium."

A "medium" is a person skilled in the art of conversing with spirits. Generally the "medium" is in the hypnotic state when he converses with the spirits.

Many effects are produced by spiritism. Writing is produced on a slate or tablet without the aid of a visible hand. Apparitions take place. The spirit of the dead is photographed. Tables

and other objects are moved about without any visible agency. Objects are lifted up in the same mysterious manner. Impressions are made on wax or other soft substances.

The spirits are supposed to reply to questions. This is often done by rappings or other signs. The answers are also conveyed by writing or by words.

Clairvoyance is often practiced by the spiritistic "medium." He reads books in unknown languages. He may never have learned a word of the language from which he is reading. He talks learnedly about things of which he is otherwise utterly ignorant. He reveals hidden things. He even reads the secret thoughts of others. He discovers diseases and tells the remedies that will cure them.

It is a mistake to suppose that spiritistic phenomena are all produced by fraud and deceit. However, it has

been shown often that the "medium" was simply deceiving his audience. Often he produces these mysterious results by trickery and sleight-of-hand.

Then again, the "medium" himself may be deceived. He may be sincere. He may think that he is really conversing with spirits. Yet all the time he is undergoing a psychic result. His phenomena are natural effects from his own abnormal state. But he does not know this.

Undoubtedly, many spiritistic phenomena may be attributed to mere natural forces. Some hold that they are results of so-called mental telepathy. Many theories have been put forth.

Spiritists form a religious sect. Its principles are very dangerous. It makes for religious indifference. It seeks to contradict the fundamental principles of Christianity.

Spiritism promotes diverse forms of

unbelief. It engenders agnosticism and pantheism. It tends toward the superstitions of paganism.

The Church warns the faithful against the dangers of spiritism. She does not say the spiritistic phenomena are produced by diabolical interference. Yet it is admitted that some of these things may be ascribed to the intervention of Satan.

The Church forbids the faithful to take part in spiritistic meetings. Not even are they permitted to attend out of curiosity. The Church condemns all spiritistic practices. They are fundamentally anti-Christian. It matters not if there be no demoniac intervention.

Sad indeed would be the plight of the human race were it given over to spiritism. It would be a return to the art of magic practiced amongst ancient pagans. It would be a degrading

influence. It would make human existence a mockery.

The very idea of spiritism is repugnant to sane reason. The dead return. They talk flippantly. They answer vain and foolish questions. They satisfy unbridled curiosity. Their messages are often blasphemous and irreligious. They have nothing to say about God. Yet they have come back from the other world.

There are some who believe in ghosts. They believe that the spirits of the dead return. These sometimes appear to certain persons, it is said. They are supposed to haunt certain places. The "haunted house" is traditional. This belief in ghosts is in no way related to spiritism.

The soul is a spirit. The bodily eye is not capable of seeing a spirit. Hence, we can not naturally see a

spirit. We can not, in reality, see a ghost.

God can give a spirit a material form. It is then visible to the human eye. Holy Scripture often mentions the apparition of angels in human form. God could give a departed soul a visible form. Yet it would be miraculous.

It can not be denied, however, that spirits of the dead have appeared to some. Yet it is probable that these apparitions are merely subjective. They are ordinarily produced by hallucination or by some unknown psychic power. Other theories are put forth. Scientists explain these apparitions in different ways.

Ghosts are called phantoms. They are sometimes described as driving a phantom horse hitched to a phantom buggy. They are also said to appear in certain dress. This shows the inconsistency of the belief. The soul of

the dead person is supposed to appear. But the horse and the buggy and the dress have no soul. It is then difficult to understand how these souls appear and disappear.

God is all-wise. He does not lend His omnipotence to fantastic escapades. He does not make sport of human intelligence. He does not work miracles without an adequate reason.

Faith teaches us that the souls of the just are in heaven. The souls of the damned are in hell. The souls that are not yet purified are in purgatory.

Belief in seeing ghosts abounds amongst the superstitious. Their minds readily seek the mysterious. They are easily frightened. Thus many supposed ghosts are mere mental illusions.

Our Holy Faith teaches us the Communion of Saints. With this we must

be content. We pray for the souls in purgatory. We beg the saints in heaven to intercede for us with God. They, in turn, pray for us. We know this by faith. It is an article of the Apostles' Creed.

CHAPTER XX

Hypnotism

HYPNOTISM is a peculiar sleep. It may be spontaneous or artificial. No external influence is used to produce spontaneous hypnotism. It is as if the person hypnotized himself.

Artificial hypnotism is produced by external means. One person hypnotizes another. He may do so by passes and gestures. He may do so by causing him to concentrate his vision upon some bright object. Then he may do so by mere will power. These means are all intended to win the consent of the person. He must surrender his will to the hypnotist. He can not be hypnotized against his will.

Three stages of hypnotism are given. They are lethargy, catalepsy and somnambulism.

There are two stages of lethargy. It may be a state of torpor in the members of the body. The head and member seem weary. The senses and the mind are active. The person knows what is taking place around him. Yet he can not then make it known to others. He remembers all after he awakes. This is called lucid lethargy.

The other stage of lethargy is different. The person is overcome by sleep. He notes little of what happens about him. Perhaps he does not notice anything. Then when he awakes he remembers nothing that happened. He merely knows that he was, in some manner, in communication with the hypnotist. This is called ordinary lethargy.

Catalepsy makes the body stiff like a corpse. The subject can be placed in any position. He may be stretched across a chair. He will lie there as

rigid as a log. The hypnotist can change his position as he will. The subject will remain as he places him.

He may lift his arm. The subject will hold it suspended. The hypnotist can make the subject take on diverse expressions. If he press back the corners of his mouth, the subject will take the expression of one smiling. If he put him in the posture of prayer, the subject will look pious and devout.

In the cataleptic state the subject can feel no pain. Yet he has some little use of his other senses. Sometimes he is somewhat conscious of what is taking place. He then remembers these impressions after he awakes. Yet he declares that he was not able to resist the force that made him act.

The stage of somnabulism produces strange effects. With half-closed eyes the subject can see the smallest objects. He can read fine print at a distance. He thinks that his senses are changed.

He sees with his nose. He smells with his ears. He hears with his tongue.

The somnambulist is ready to follow suggestions. He is told that he is a king. Then he takes on a grave and dignified look. He is told that he is a little child. He will at once begin to play about like a child. He is told that he is a rooster. He will flap his arms like wings and perhaps try to crow.

Some have ascribed great power to hypnotism. Such are knowledge of hidden and future things and knowledge of unknown languages. Yet there is nothing beyond natural effects in hypnotism.

Strange cases have indeed been cited. But later the explanation for the phenomenon is often found. A certain girl was hypnotized. She spoke Latin. Yet she had never studied the language. Many thought that this was a direct hypnotic effect.

Later it was learned that the girl did not speak the language. She merely repeated phrases that she had heard from others. The hypnotic state had excited her memory. Thus she recalled the expressions she had heard.

Hypnotism is a dangerous art. "It is," says Dr. Lapponi, "almost always harmful. Sometimes indeed it may be useful. It is to be classed with serious surgical operations. It would certainly be immoral and forbidden to perform a major surgical operation as a joke. It would be immoral and forbidden for a person who knows not the art of surgery to perform such an operation."[1]

In the hypnotic state one person abandons his will to another. He blindly follows his suggestions. Ordinarily it is morally wrong. God has given us a will to guide our own actions.

[1] Hypnotism and Spiritism, Rome, 1897, page 208.

Hypnotism may be used in medical science. Yet it must always be used prudently. It must be used only for great utility. It must be used only in exceptional cases. The hypnotist must be a man of faith and character. Only then would we be permitted to submit to hypnotism.

Hypnotism is a dangerous practice. It generally produces injurious effects upon the body. It may also injure the mind when often repeated.

There is also danger of superstition in hypnotism. Its mysterious effects may be ascribed to magic. Then it may be allied with spiritism.

It may also lead to heretical opinions. Some grow enthusiastic about the powers of hypnotism. They ascribe the miracles of the saints to its influence. They make accepted supernatural events the result of mere hypnotic influence.

Originally, animal magnetism and

mesmerism were mere hypnotism. Now they have become largely superstitious practices.

In general, all forms of hypnotism are to be shunned. Hypnotism has done little, if any, good in the sphere of science. Its utility in medical practice is doubtful. Hence, we may well follow the advice of Mother Church: "We will look upon it as a dangerous practice."

CHAPTER XXI

Temptation of God

TO PUT God to a test is called temptation of God. It is the same as to ask God to prove His divine perfections.

Unbelievers often tempt God. They refuse to believe that God is omnipotent. They ask Him to show His power. Perhaps they ask Him to restore a dead person to life. Then they say they will believe in His power.

Some may refuse to believe that God is all-merciful. They are suffering. They ask God to relieve them miraculously and thus show His mercy. Others tempt God out of rashness or curiosity. They do not doubt God's

power. Yet they ask God to show His power to them.

Others again tempt God by presumption. They do not doubt God's power. Yet without cause or necessity they expect God to work a miracle for them.

A person may tempt God only virtually. He is dangerously sick. He refuses all medical attention. He expects God to cure him directly.

A person exposes himself needlessly to danger. He expects God to save him. This is to tempt God. Such were those foolish persons of old who underwent the test of fire. They cast themselves into the fire. They expected God to save them to prove their innocence.

It is not always forbidden to ask God to perform a miracle. But it must be asked for a just reason. It must always be with the condition "if God wills it."

We may beg God to save a person who is fatally injured. We may beg Him to restore to health a person who is afflicted with a deadly disease. We may beg God for any extraordinary favors. Yet we must do so in the spirit of prayer.

It is never permitted to offer to produce a miracle for the conversion of heretics. The saints and martyrs sometimes did this by divine inspiration. For others it would be to tempt God.

Wilful and deliberate temptation of God is always a mortal sin. It is grave irreverence to God. It is disrespect for divine wisdom. It is to expect God to use His omnipotence for empty and useless purposes.

It was thus the devil tempted Christ. He wanted Him to prove His divine power. He asked Him to turn stones into bread. He asked Him to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the

temple, but Christ said: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."[1]

Temptation of God may arise from imprudence. A person may be slightly ill. He refuses all natural remedies. He expects God to cure him. The matter is not serious. He thus commits only a venial sin.

Sometimes ignorance and thoughtlessness excuse persons from grave sin in this matter. They may be distracted by grief. A mother may cry out and ask God to restore her dead child. She may say: "If Thou art a merciful God give me back my child in life." In itself this would be a grave sin. It would be tempting God. Yet such expressions generally proceed from thoughtlessness rather than from malice.

God is infinitely good and infinitely perfect. It is a joy to put our whole trust in Him. He knows what is best

[1] St. Matthew iv, 7.

for us. He will use His divine power with divine wisdom. Gladly do we say with Christ in His agony: "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."[2]

[2] St. Matthew xxvi, 39.

CHAPTER XXII

Sacrilege

A SACRILEGE is the misuse of anything sacred. In a wider sense, any sin against religion is a sacrilege. Such are the sins of divination, magic and the like.

Anything dedicated by the Church to divine public worship is sacred. Persons consecrated to God by the authority of the Church are sacred. Places set aside for divine worship are sacred.

A sacrilege may be threefold. It may be personal, local or real. Persons, places and things may be sacred. Hence, there are three kinds of sacrilege.

A sacrilege is by its nature a grave sin against religion. It is a sin against the reverence due to God. For it is

disrespect for something that is dedicated to Him.

To misuse a person consecrated to God is a personal sacrilege. All that have received Holy Orders are sacred. Even those in Minor Orders and those who have received tonsure are considered sacred. All religious are sacred. Nuns and Brothers who have made the religious profession by a perpetual vow of chastity belong to these.

To do physical violence to a priest or a religious is a sacrilege. Any sin against the Sixth Commandment with a consecrated person is a sacrilege. Even sins of thought and desire that are directed toward such persons are sacrileges. To cite such persons before a civil court is a sacrilege, unless it be done by permission of ecclesiastical authority.

To violate a sacred place is a local sacrilege. It is local in the sense that it pertains to a place. Any place

blessed or consecrated for divine worship is sacred. Such are churches and chapels.

To be a sacrilege the desecration must take place in the church proper. It must be in the place where divine services are held. This ordinarily includes the auditorium, the choir and the sanctuary.

Unjust shedding of blood in a sacred place is a sacrilege. It is not necessary that it should be murder. It suffices to inflict a wound from which there comes a copious flow of blood. It is enough if the wound be inflicted in the church or chapel. The bleeding may take place outside.

Murder desecrates a church or chapel. It matters not if there be no blood shed. To be a sacrilege the crime is committed in the church or chapel. It matters not if death take place outside.

To conduct the funeral of a publicly

excommunicated person in a church is a sacrilege. It desecrates the church. The same is true regarding the funerals of infidels and all non-baptized persons. However, this does not include unbaptized infants of the faithful.

Theft committed in a church is a sacrilege. A grave sin of theft constitutes a grave sacrilege. However, to be a sacrilege it must be the theft of something that belongs in some manner to the church.

The desecration of a sacred thing is a real sacrilege. It is called real because it pertains to a thing.

A real sacrilege may be committed in a threefold manner. It may be the misuse of a sacred thing. It may be the unjust claiming of a sacred thing. Then it may be the buying or selling of a sacred thing.

The Sacraments are sacred things. Hence, it is a sacrilege to administer or receive a Sacrament unworthily.

To show disrespect for the Blessed Sacrament is a sacrilege.

The sacred vessels, crosses, statues, holy oils, relics, the Sacred Scriptures and sacred edifices are sacred things. To desecrate any of these constitutes a real sacrilege.

Disrespect shown for the Sacred Scriptures is sinful. To quote the Scriptures for vain and sinful purposes is a sacrilege. It is, however, not a grave matter if they are quoted in harmless jokes. If there is no irreverence, it may even be entirely sinless. Fragments of books in which the Sacred Scriptures are quoted may be treated as are other books.

Unblessed statues of the saints may be used as are other statues and ornaments. Yet care must be taken to guard against contempt and irreverence.

To desecrate the priestly vestments is a sacrilege. It would be a sacrilege to wear them out of contempt or

mockery. It would be a sacrilege to wear them as ordinary clothing. They are blessed for the divine ministry.

To appropriate any church property is a sacrilege. It may be real estate. It may be material intended for the structure of a church or other ecclesiastical building. These things must be in the possession of the Church. It would not be a sacrilege to take something that had been abandoned.

The laity are not permitted to touch those things that are used about the Blessed Sacrament. Such are the chalice, the ciborium, the pyx, the luna. They are also forbidden to touch corporals, palls and purificators that have been used at the altar.

The priest must wash these sacred linens in one water. A deacon or subdeacon may also wash them. The water from this washing is poured in the sacrarium. This is a conduit which runs down beneath the church.

After the first washing any lay person may touch the sacred linens. Lay brothers and nuns who act as sacristans are often granted the special privilege of touching the sacred vessels and the sacred linens. For a lay person to touch them without special permission is a venial sin.

All may touch the vessels which do not come in direct contact with the Blessed Sacrament. They may also touch corporals, palls and purificators that have not been used since they were washed. They may touch the altarcloths, the linings of tabernacles and other linens.

The Church guards, as the apple of her eye, those persons, places and things that pertain to divine worship. They are set apart for the worship of God. They are consecrated to Him. When we show respect for them we honor God.

CHAPTER XXIII

Simony

SIMONY is the sin of buying or selling spiritual things. It takes its name from Simon Magus. "And then Simon saw, that by the imposition of the hands of the Apostles, the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying: Give me also this power."[1]

The set intention of buying or selling anything spiritual is simony. The transaction need not have taken place. It is enough if one party offer to buy or sell. Thus Simon merely offered to buy the powers of the Apostles.

It is simony to buy or sell things that are connected with the spiritual. Such would be the consecrated vessels used in the administration of the Sac-

[1] Acts of the Apostles viii, 19.

raments. However, to sell the sacred vessels for their material value would not constitute simony.

By spiritual things, we understand supernatural things intended for the salvation of souls. They are graces, the gifts of the Holy Ghost. They are the Sacraments, sermons, prayers and sacramentals.

To these belong also consecrations, absolutions, dispensations, blessings and the conferring of ecclesiastical offices and dignities.

Three things combine to make simony. They are the matter, the pact and the price. The matter may be anything spiritual. It may also be anything annexed to the spiritual.

The pact may be merely mental. It suffices to offer a price with the intention of binding another to give something spiritual.

The price may be anything of temporal value. It may be money or

other material things. It may be service, labor or other favors.

Simony is a species of sacrilege. It is a misuse of sacred things. It can be a grave sin. It profanes the things that belong to divine worship.

It would be simony to attempt to buy any Sacrament. It would be a grave sin to offer anything as the price of a Sacrament or a sacramental.

The priest accepts offerings when he administers certain Sacraments. This is not given as pay for his labor. It is not given as a price for the Sacrament. It is an offering made for the support of the priest. "For the laborer is worthy of his hire."[2] "Know you not," says St. Paul, "that they who work in the holy place, eat the things that are of the holy place; and they that serve the altar, partake with the altar."[3]

The offerings made to priests are stipends. The Church encourages the

[2] St. Luke x, 7. [3] 1 Epistle to the Corinthians ix, 13.

faithful to contribute to the support of their pastors.

Offerings are made for Masses. These are called Mass intentions or Mass stipends. They are not a price for the Mass. The faithful should not offer the priest intentions for Masses when he is in the confessional.

The amount of the offering made for Masses is established by custom. Upon this custom the bishop determines the amount of the alms that is to be given in his diocese.

It is not allowed to buy or sell indulgenced articles. Such are crosses, medals and rosaries. If any of these are sold they lose their indulgences.

The Church has made strict laws to govern the sanctity of her ministrations. She puts heavy penalties upon those who try to traffic in her blessings. She has a loving mother's care for the gifts which she has received from heaven.

CHAPTER XXIV

Relics and Images

RELICS are primarily the corporal remains of the saints and martyrs. In a wider sense, anything that was closely associated with Christ or the saints is a relic. Thus, pieces of clothing may be relics. The instruments of martyrdom are relics.

The cross of Christ is the most precious relic that the Church possesses. A large portion of the cross is kept in a beautiful church in Rome. This church is called the "Church-of-the-Holy-Cross-in-Jerusalem."

In the early days of the Church the Christians treasured very highly the bodies of the martyrs. They often enclosed them in beautiful tombs. There they went to pray. There they

begged the martyrs to intercede for them.

The bodies of heroes and great men are honored in every country. Cities vie with one another to have the remains of the illustrious dead in their tombs. Often honor is paid to the dead on anniversaries. This honor is akin to the veneration we show for the relics of Christ and the saints.

In the days of the catacombs, the tombs of illustrious martyrs were used as altars. Throughout the world today every altar contains a relic from the body of a martyr.

Often only a small portion of the body is venerated as a relic. It may be a piece of bone. It may be a lock of hair. Thus fond mothers often keep a lock of hair from a departed darling.

We venerate the relics of the saints. In life the bodies of the saints were members of Christ. They were temples

of the Holy Ghost. They were destined to rise unto eternal glory. For this reason we venerate them.

God has wrought numberless miracles through the relics of the saints. Several examples are mentioned in the Old Testament. A dead man was brought to life when his body touched the bones of the Prophet Eliseus.

"And some that were burying a man, saw the rovers, and cast the body into the sepulchre of Eliseus. And when it had touched the bones of Eliseus, the man came to life, and stood upon his feet."[1]

Such miracles are also mentioned in the New Testament. "And God wrought by the hand of Paul more than common miracles. So that even there were brought from his body to the sick, handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them,

[1] 4 Kings xiii, 21.

and the wicked spirits went out of them."[2]

The Church has laid down strict regulations for the public veneration of relics. It is not allowed to show public veneration for the relics of those who are not canonized saints or declared blessed.

None other than authentic relics may be publicly venerated. Such are relics declared authentic by the authority of the Church. Then there are other relics that have been venerated from time immemorial. These are considered authentic.

The Sacred Congregation of Relics at Rome decides all questions pertaining to relics. Special attention is paid to relics taken from the catacombs.

Pope Leo XIII gave forth two letters, in 1881 and 1883, respectively. Herein he warns the bishops of the

[2] Acts of the Apostles xix, 11, 12.

world to protect the faithful from the traffic of false relics.

In previous centuries the relics of many unknown martyrs were found. These were given a name. They were said to be "christened." They would then be called the relics of St. Felix, St. Victor or some other saint. This practice was forbidden in the year 1643.

Thus the Church guards carefully against any abuse in the veneration of relics. She takes care that none other than true and authentic relics be venerated by the faithful.

We honor the relics of Christ and the saints. Through them we pay homage to God. We venerate every vestige of God's dear friends. We honor those who were illustrious for their love and service to God on earth. We venerate them because through them shone the splendor of God's grace.

In like manner we honor Christ and the saints through statues and pictures. We honor the cross. It is the sign of salvation. We venerate the crucifix. It depicts our loving Saviour dying for us on the cross.

Our churches and our homes contain pictures and statues of Christ's blessed Mother. We are Christians. It is but natural that we should love and venerate the Mother of our divine Redeemer.

We have pictures and statues of the saints. They are heroes of the Faith. Surely they are dear to us. Well may we honor those whom God has honored.

All nations erect statues to their heroes and their illustrious men. They honor their memory. Thus we Christians honor our illustrious brethren that are gone.

People have pictures of their friends and loved ones in their homes. The

Church is the house of God. It is not strange then to find pictures and statues of God's holy Mother there. It is quite natural to find pictures and statues of the saints there. For they are the beloved friends of God.

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